

CLASS STRUGGLE

TUCAR
AND
Coalisland

what IWG
stands
for

FRANCE
Revolution-
ary tactics
ON Popular
Front bloc

SLP a crossroads
for the class

**THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE
& THE WORKING CLASS**

CS3 20p
MAY 78



**IRISH
WORKERS
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BMR/Adam

SLP AT A CROSSROADS FOR THE CLASS

The emergence of the Socialist Labour Party comes at a time when the working class struggle for socialism in Ireland is at a crossroads. After eight years of war in the North in which a mass struggle led by an armed offensive against the Northern state, loyalism and British imperialism has dwindled away to a beleaguered and demoralised outpost as the strategy of the Provisionals prove increasingly futile;

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Pressure of space has meant that a major article on the Rank and File Movement will be held over to the next issue.

opportunity to build the working class and the trade union movement, uniting within it and behind it the strong and the weak, the employed and the unemployed, the young and the adult, North and South. In order that we can do this successfully, we must seriously consider the problems raised before us of what kind of party, what kind of programme, what kind of internal democratic organisation the SLP must have. For, there is a great danger that, given the failures of the last years, many comrades both inside and outside the Party believe that [organizational] unity alone, independent of what kind of programme or methods, can offer a permanent and serious answer to the divisions within and between workers in Ireland. This tendency within sections of workers has been strengthened for a number of reasons:

(1) Because of the repeated and total failure of every organisation calling itself socialist - the Labour Party, Official Sinn Féin (WP), the "Communist" Party, Provisionals and the revolutionary Marxist

2 SLP AT A CROSSROADS FOR THE CLASS

The emergence of the Socialist Labour Party comes at a time when the working class struggle for socialism in Ireland is at a crossroads. After eight years of war in the North in which a mass struggle led by an armed offensive against the Northern state, loyalism and British imperialism has dwindled away to a beleaguered and demoralised retreat as the strategy and tactics of the Provisionals prove increasingly futile;

after seven years of growing Southern state repression against republicans and anyone who in any way identifies with the resistance of the Northern minority;

after five years of deepening economic recession in which capitalism has, so far, successfully placed the burden of paying for its crisis-ridden system onto the backs of workers and their families;

after years of cynical betrayals and collaboration by the Labour Party and the trade union leadership in all of these policies, the first serious outline of an organised and coherent fight-back by the most class conscious sections of our class has begun to appear.

The massive rout of the Coalition, then an outbreak of unofficial strikes aimed as much against the trade union leadership as against employers, redundancies and wage freezes, and finally, the formation of the Socialist Labour Party following the expulsion of comrades Noel Browne and Matt Merrigan from the Labour Party, signalled the clearest feeling among sections of the working class for a new party capable of taking up the struggles on all fronts and welding them into a programmatic strategy for smashing imperialism and capitalism in Ireland and establishing a workers state.

It is clear that thousands of workers are determined to no longer go on suffering the effects of a system whose only logic is to make Ireland a profitable paradise for foreign and native employers. Many workers are beginning to see the need for new political solutions which if fought for resolutely in the factories, shops and communities, can lay the basis for uniting the class in all its ranks to fight not only on immediate issues (jobs, wages, equal pay, contraception etc., repression, democratic rights) but also at the same time preparing and developing the only forces for an offensive to overthrow the system as a whole. Already the interest in and support for the Socialist Labour Party indicates new awareness of workers to the possibilities being opened up. We must take every opportunity to build the S.L.P. into a 32-County mass party of the working class and the trade union movement, uniting within it and behind it the strong and the weak, the employed and the unemployed, men and women, the young and the adult, North and South. In order that we can do this successfully, we must seriously consider the problems raised before us of what kind of party, what kind of programme, what kind of internal democratic organisation the SLP must have. For, there is a great danger that, given the failures of the past years, many comrades both inside and outside the Party believe that organisational unity alone, independent of what kind of programme or methods, can offer a permanent and serious answer to the divisions within and between workers in Ireland. This tendency within sections of workers has been strengthened for a number of reasons:

(1) Because of the repeated and total failure of every organisation calling itself socialist - the Labour Party, Official Sinn Fein (WP), the "Communist" Party, Provisionals and the revolutionary Marxist

left, many workers are deeply suspicious of left rhetoric about 'socialism' and 'the working class'. In many cases this suspicion has developed to a view that it is political ideas themselves that are the cause of the divisions and weakness of the Irish left! Furthermore, many young workers growing up in a period when, both in Europe and Ireland, socialist ideas have become very widespread, remain deeply confused about the relative merits of different ideas and strategies put forward by the many different groups. In the light of the evident failures of the Irish left it is tempting to reject any serious consideration of different strategies as so much "big talk" and "hot air" leading only to more confusion and despair.

(2) The SLP is a spectrum of socialist currents ranging from those who have spent a large part of their political careers in the Labour Party to those who make up the tiny groups of the revolutionary marxist left. What they all share is a common experience of setbacks and failure to grow in a period of struggle which, objectively, offered unparalleled opportunities to test the correctness or incorrectness of their programmes, strategies and methods. It is natural, then that many militants in the Party fear the possibility of our new party wrecking itself if the differences are not buried for the common good of "unity" and "action". They believe that the Party can be built on this principle.

However understandable these views are, we believe they must be rejected completely. For it must be resolutely faced that the first mark of an honest and serious party is to accept the responsibility it has, if it claims the allegiance and loyalty of workers, to learn the lessons of past political failures in programmes, strategies and methods. If the SLP is serious about building a new party, a mass party, then we have as a principle the obligation to understand why socialists, both reformists and those calling themselves revolutionary, have remained impotent before the vicious anti-working class policies carried out by the bosses and their states North and South. To consciously turn away from this responsibility and refuse to make absolutely certain that the path we are taking is not a dead end is a sign of cynicism towards the real suffering and hardship of workers and their families that lies behind our political failures.

Therefore, we believe that it is necessary, in a spirit of honest and open debate and discussion the lessons of the Irish Labour Party, the parliamentary road and reformism, the "physical force" tradition of republicanism, Stalinism represented by the C.P. and Officials and Maoists, and the "direct action" programmes and strategies of revolutionary socialists, be fully chronicled and accounted for and a balance sheet of plus and minus be drawn up as the bedrock of not only our party programme but also of the political consciousness of our party leaders and members. Only in this way can a real workers leadership emerge as the political rock of the party.

The Irish Workers Group approached the formation of the SLP in the above spirit - we honestly and openly stated at the first conference of the party that we considered the "aims and objectives" section drawn up by the steering committee to embody, consciously or not, a reformist course for the SLP no different in essence from the Labour Party. As Comrade Browne, for one, had stated at an earlier meeting his own doubts about this course, and as the membership had had no time to debate this question, we were compelled

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to argue both for a special conference in January (now in May) on Party Programme, and for our own proposals to counter those of the steering committee. At the conference we were attacked as doctrinaire and elitist. We refute both these charges.

The real doctrinaires were those who, without debate or discussion by the membership, were embarking on another reformist course for the SLP. The IWG stood for a frank and honest debate before the members on the issue. Indeed, in the intervening period, the failure of the Party to offer real leadership in crucial working class struggles locally, especially at Ferenka, flowed precisely from its failure to take seriously the need for radically new methods and perspectives.

As to the charge of elitism, we would point out that the IWG alone of all the marxist groups in the conference (SWM, MSR, LWR - all commented upon in other articles in Class Struggle -) alone openly argued for our programme and demanded the right of tendencies to organise as a basis for full internal democratic life. We stated who we were even when standing a candidate for the National Executive, we stated what we stood for and how we thought the party should be built. The SWM, LWR, MSR etc. refused either to identify themselves or argue for their programmes. They did this for the opportunist reason that all of them believed that the average member of the SLP was "not ready yet" for their "sophisticated" programmes. We ask comrades to judge who was being elitist.

Because the IWG takes the emergence of the SLP as a serious test of our ideas and strategies before the working class, we did not flinch from putting our positions even though we knew we would lose many of our resolutions. And our confidence in both our ideas and in the political intelligence and experience of the membership was amply rewarded in the passing of several of our most important resolutions on economic policy - and that against the recommendation of the steering committee.

The IWG stand for the building of the SLP in the above spirit, as the basis of a mass 32-County revolutionary working class party, open to every current of socialist thought. Of all the groups in the party, SWM, LWR, MSR, we alone have actively undertaken to recruit and build the party in the North as the real test of the SLP's claim to be a party for all Irish workers. We believe that unless the SLP makes a serious effort to win support of anti-unionist workers, long reduced to passive and demoralised spectators by the elitist methods of the Provisionals, and to disgusted cynics by the antics of the Irish and British Trade Union Bureaucracy, it will remain a deeply weakened and divided party in the 26 Counties.

The SLP must establish itself by offering anti-unionist workers a forum for serious political debate and discussion as the basis for a coherent socialist programme of action, all too long absent from the struggle in the North. In this spirit and towards this end the IWG fight for, despite all our differences with others, the building of the SLP as a mass 32-County revolutionary workers party. (See "What We Stand For" in Class Struggle.)

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THE WORKERS REPUBLIC AND REPUBLICANISM

"If you remove the English flag tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin castle, unless you set about the organisation of the socialist republic your efforts would be in vain. England would still rule you, through her capitalists, through her landlords, through the whole array of the commercial institutions she planted in the country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs. England would rule you to your ruin."

- James Connolly on the "physical force" tradition of Irish republicanism.

During the last eight years in the North the Provisional republican movement has been the leadership of the struggle to drive out the British army as the key to establishing what the movement calls "a democratic socialist republic". In the course of that period the struggle which at one time had the active support and the involvement of tens of thousands of anti-unionist workers in the North, as well as the moral support of thousands more in the South, has declined to the situation today where a deeply demoralised and beleaguered minority grimly look on as passive spectators on a war in which the Provisionals' tactics and strategy has become more and more counter-productive to their stated aims. However much as revolutionary socialists we recognise the need for an armed defence of the anti-unionist ghettos against the loyalists and the British army, and the corresponding strategic need for an armed offensive to drive out the British army and smash the loyalist state, it must be frankly stated that the responsibility for the cul-de-sac facing the national struggle lies almost completely with the bankrupt strategy and methods of the Provisional republicans. No matter how much one acknowledges the heroic sacrifices made by that movement and its supporters, it has to be faced that under the leadership of the republican movement, whatever progressive role it did play in bringing down Stormont, no major concrete gains have been achieved since, by the anti-unionist working class. We believe that the struggle for socialism in Ireland cannot and will not be taken forward by a movement so obviously incapable of learning any lessons from its failures - so inflexible - politically and organisationally - to the need for major strategic and tactical changes in the light of changing political and military realities around it.

We do not make these criticisms lightly or out of a smug attempt to prove how "superior" our ideas are. We do so out of a duty as revolutionary socialists to make a class assessment of the political programme, ideas, strategy, and tactics of the most dominant tradition in Irish politics in order that we may draw the many lessons, positive and negative, as a basis for a correct programmatic strategy for our party and the Irish working class on the national question, and correspondingly a correct

tactical relationship to the republican movement and its supporters. In order to do this fully we must analyse the historical, political and ideological roots of republicanism as the only means of understanding why, despite its historic failure to defeat British Imperialism, its tradition and methods still remain deeply embedded in Catholic ghettos of the North; and why, therefore it is an obstacle to the building of a mass revolutionary workers party here.

REPUBLICANISM

The basic ideas of Irish republicanism (before the development of the distinctly Catholic influence which clearly characterises the Provisionals) were derived by the Fenians in the 1850's and after from the ideas of the United Irishmen, who were the equivalent of the French Jacobin revolutionaries who led the French revolution in 1789 against feudalism and monarchic state. In the 1860's and 70's the Fenian movement's ideas and programme were for national independence and agrarian revolution against British political control and against the English landlord system. At the time only the most rudimentary outlines of a working class existed and no socialist movement was possible. Therefore the programme of the Fenians, and all those following them since, represents the class interests of the Irish small farmers to develop, free from outside influence, a basically capitalist economy. For that reason Marxists (including James Connolly) described republicanism as "a petit-bourgeois movement" - that no matter how progressive its struggle against British Imperialism might be, it shared a basic social and economic world outlook with the bourgeoisie big capitalists. Before the development of the Irish working class, republicanism as a body of ideas and practice stood for the only coherent programmatic solution for the development of the Irish nation against British Imperialism. With the development of the working class, there emerged another class which if it was to achieve its freedom had not only to get rid of British political rule - the aim of republicanism - but also simultaneously to destroy the economic system of capitalism whether Irish or foreign, which lay at the base of British imperialism, and replace it with a workers' state - "The Workers Republic". This was the aim of James Connolly and the Irish Citizen Army, whose revolutionary socialism represented a different tradition, one which embodied all that was progressive in republicanism - (independence, and freedom of development for Ireland) but went further because it located the working class as the class alone capable of winning the fight for national freedom.

Traditional republicanism has always been opposed to Connolly's ideas and traditions, whatever lip-service is paid to him for Easter 1916. That movement, including the Provisionals to-day, blurs the distinction between workers' and capitalists' separate and distinct class interests. For this reason Connolly tried hard to keep himself apart from republican traditionalism right up until the merging of the forces for the 1916 Rising.

His own failure to build a revolutionary party based on the mass of Irish workers, with a correct socialist strategy and tactics to link both national and economic freedom struggles, meant that after his death traditional republicanism remained dominant and hostile to any working-class-based struggle for national freedom. One vivid example of this hostility was revealed when during the seizure of land by thousands of rural workers in the West, the "democratic" Dail of 1918 condemned such acts in 1920 as "stirring up trouble amongst our fellow countrymen". The I.R.A. was used to prevent workers from taking over what was rightly theirs, they enforced payment of rent, and arrested and even ordered out of the country leaders of local land agitation.

In the period of the '20's and 30's which saw the emergence on a world scale of the ideas and practice of Stalinism, and in Ireland, a new "Communist Party", sections of the defeated republican movement moved "left" to embrace the "stages" theory of modern populist republicanism. What this meant in practice is best seen in the republican movement's relationship to Fianna Fail in the period after 1932 when the party formed government under De Valera. It was to remain a deeply unstable government for at least four years - it relied heavily on the mobilised republican movement to fend off the Blueshirt fascists, and then when the danger was passed, began large-scale repression of republicans, ending with military courts and firing squads during World War II. The republican movement adopted a benevolent attitude towards the pro-capitalist De Valera against the Blueshirts - it simply had no conception of taking power itself, nor any clear programme to fight for, nor any adequate understanding of the class struggle in Ireland. It is this which sums up what we mean by "petit-bourgeois" - a movement tied fundamentally to the bourgeoisie by its basic ideas. It was not only the right but also the "left" of the movement. The left-wing Republican Congress of 1934 itself split in two over whether to take as the immediate objective, "the Republic" or "The Workers Republic". Those accepting the stages conception believed the "Republic" was better, "broader", rallying cry. That was the beginning of the Left or populist republicanism whose modern offspring is the Official republican group today.

The Provisionals in essence, despite all their political camouflage about socialism, workers and capitalism stand for the strictly nationalist demands for independence and unity. Thus their "strategy" is the age-old physical force struggle to drive the British army out of "occupied" Ireland. The fact that the same British imperialism and capitalist interests exist on a large scale in the South where no British army exists merits no political or strategic recognition, notwithstanding James Connolly's clear indictment of any movement claiming to free Ireland yet ignoring the economic reality of capitalism. The Provisionals speak of the North as "just a step" towards a socialist republic. They do not see that there can be no "first steps" between capitalism and a workers republic, - either the

bourgeoisie in Ireland, North and South is overthrown or it retains its state power. Just as against Britain, republicans have always focussed on the state power in Ireland, so the revolutionary socialists in the school of Lenin, Trotsky and Connolly focus on class power in the state: it will be either bourgeois capitalist power or workers' power. Within the class struggle against British Imperialism and capitalism in Ireland, a movement which blurs this question is the same as someone within the republican movement blurring on whether Ireland should be free of Britain.

Only a movement which will

- (i) mobilise the Irish working class to overthrow the Irish ruling class at the same time as it fights to throw British Imperialism's political, economic, and military presence out of Ireland.
- (ii) assume direct control of society and a planned economy, through the establishment of workers councils; can call itself socialist legitimately.

Clearly, with these criteria, neither the Provisional's Eire Nua programme nor their practice, North or South, corresponds to that perspective. In the South where the heaviest blows have been struck against the movement, it has done nothing to relate its struggle to the struggle of workers for socialism, for the obvious reason that it does not know how to do it.

When it speaks of nationalism Eire Nua does not mean the end of competition in the economy but "to enable a national structure within each industry to be obtained, taking into account local and national needs". (1971 edition p.18-19). To supplement this, it proposes a system of producer co-operatives. The whole project is not seen as part of a programme for smashing the capitalist state and replacing it with workers' councils which alone can make state ownership a socialist and not a middle class demand. Thus Eire Nua's economic model, maintaining capitalist competition as it does, is a model of small scale capitalism rather than socialism - it is a programme of greater social justice within capitalism.

Furthermore, Eire Nua proposes the idea that socialism can be built in one country - they share this view with the Communist Party, the Officials, and indeed, many of the SLP leadership - this is what is meant by the term "democratic socialism". It is a basic misconception of the nature of socialism whose first principle is the international unity of the working class as a condition for socialism. There can be no Irish "Socialist" state surrounded by a sea of capitalism, as the Provisionals imagine. The productive forces in Ireland are part of the world productive forces emerging from the development of capitalism and imperialism - it is the reality of being part of the production chain which links the working class everywhere, that is

the basis for our internationalism. To attempt to cut Ireland off from these links of productive forces would be to condemn the Irish working class to a regime of poverty and backwardness and to be prey inevitably to world imperialism. Therefore as socialists we see the struggle for Irish national freedom as one part of an international battle against world imperialism. Connolly went out in 1916 believing that the Irish working class were merely striking a first blow in a general battle that was not confined to Ireland:

"Starting thus, Ireland may yet set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last warlord".

For a socialist this internationalist point of view is indispensable as the basis for formulating a party programme. Without it sooner or later the interests of the working classes are blurred and confused by "national interests". In this respect, the Provisionals as can be seen from their attempts to formulate an economic programme which stands unequivocally for Irish capitalists against foreign, and studiously ignores the questions of unemployment, wage cuts, equal pay etc are defenders in the south of the "national interest" against the international class solidarity.

Finally, the organisation structure of the provisionals and for that matter of all republican groups, claiming to be in some way socialist, bears no relationship to the kind of internal democratic regime demanded by a revolutionary workers' party. For the latter only a conscious knowledge of and an ability to apply creatively in struggles the party political programme will suffice for being an active member. As a petit-bourgeois movement based historically on isolated groups of small farmers and radicals and not on the organised working class in the cities and towns, republicanism has evolved an organisational structure reflecting its basic strategy of "physical force". The military wing acts not in relationship to a political programme being fought for among the masses and thus seeking to link all activity to broadening the involvement of the masses in a direction which deepens the conflict with the system at every level - political, economic and military. Instead the military wing and its armed struggle constitutes the only strategy. The political wing has no policy-making function, except to act as a propaganda machine for the I.R.A. Thus there can be no internal democracy within the Provisionals - in either wing. The real drawbacks of this whole structure have become increasingly clear in the last six years when following Bloody Sunday the real possibility existed, if a revolutionary socialist party had been built, to have opened up the perspective of Armed Fronts of workers, socialists and republicans; the building of workers' councils, the general strike and the struggle for a Workers Government. Instead the Provisionals, having grown enormously, even after the abolition of Stormont continued their bombing campaign mindlessly. The British were forced back but changed their tactics, strengthening the SDLP as a real political force in an effort to draw the sting out of the mobilised masses, North and South. The complete inflexibility of the Provos' military campaign, despite its impressive ability to go on bombing, left them unable to out-manoeuvre the SDLP whose support among the Catholic

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THE WORKING CLASS IN THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE

James Connolly's action in the 1916 rising attempted what is still the key political task facing Irish workers - to bring the working class to the direct leadership of the national struggle as the centrepiece of the fight for a workers republic. This was the reason why Connolly was the driving force in pushing for a rising while the war lasted. This was Connolly's key act of political insight and revolutionary courage and its presence in the tradition of struggle of the Irish working class is his main contribution.

Despite all of this, Connolly is a very ambiguous figure claimed by all kinds of political groupings from the Labour Party to the IRSP and the far left. This ambiguity is crystallised in two contradictory views of Connolly's class position in leading out the Citizen Army in the 1916 rising. One view pictures him saying that from that morning there would be no more separate armies - Irish Volunteers and Irish Citizen Army - but only the one fused army of the Irish Republic. The opposed view pictures him as advising the I.C.A. to hold onto their guns as the people they were going out with would not go far enough for them; and then they would, as workers, need their guns to fight the whole way to the Workers Republic.

Clearly these two views of Connolly show two radically different class positions. In terms of the second view Connolly is successfully advocating joint action with the republicans, while keeping the programme and banner of the workers and their Citizen Army separate and clearly distinct from that of the Volunteers who are led by bourgeois nationalists. (March separately strike together). This has the dynamic within it of giving the workers, their party and their army the chance in the rising and its aftermath to come to the effective and full political and military lead of the national struggle. In terms of the first view Connolly is mistakingly furling and subordinating the banner of independent working-class politics for the sake of spurious unity with the nationalist Volunteers, who as mere republicans are inevitably doomed to physically oppose the struggle for national freedom in the form of the Workers Republic. The most recent work "Under the Starry Plough" by Frank Robbins, an I.C.A. member, is unequivocal that the first picture is the correct one. In any case it was this perspective that came to dominate the labour movement and I.C.A. after Connolly's death even though the workers showed over and over their full willingness, given a revolutionary Marxist leadership, to rise to the head of the independence struggle between 1916 and 1922. The tragedy was that Connolly was executed by British Imperialism and that he left behind no worked out Rev. Marxist programme, and no cadre trained round the fight for it, capable of forging the nucleus of a Rev. Marxist Party that alone would be adequate

to the task of bringing the workers as workers out to the head of the independence struggle. In the absence of this the situation described by Robbins inevitably followed:

"The kernel of the problem was that without such a man to guide the organisation the majority of the newer members, strange as it may seem, did not hold or advocate the social and political views which had motivated those who fought in 1916 and which were responsible for the courage and tenacity the men and women displayed in many actions during the historic week of struggle" (Under the Starry Plough p.202)

The degree to which the Rising involved the rank and file of the Irish Transport Union is shown in the fact that the Conference of the Irish Trades Union Congress and Labour Party in 1916 did not support the Rising and evaded the issue of those killed as freedom fighters by passing a vote of sympathy with all those killed in both sides. The spurious nature of the unity presided over by Johnston in the saddle in the ITUC & LP, is shown here. It was an unprincipled unity, preserved only by glossing over basic political differences; and it was preserved by the bureaucracy of the ITUC & LP at all costs under the guise of the importance of keeping heavy battalions of the loyalist skilled workers within a totally compromised bloc with anti-imperialist workers. This bloc was a political millstone round the necks of the big majority of Irish workers, who were growing ever more deeply anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist. The ITUC & LP instinctively grasped it as such and preserved its existence. On the other hand, Connolly's leadership was directed as a dagger at the heart of this bloc; the stress was put by him on the principled unity in action of all anti-imperialist workers now as the only way to genuinely win loyalist workers later. It is important too to keep in focus the fact that the 1913 Lockout did not end in a simple drawn battle. It was much more a defeat for the anti imperialist majority of the Irish working class as a whole. The drift out of the Irish Transport Union in its aftermath was severe. By the Rising the membership of the ITGWU was down to 5000. Against this background and the confusion caused by McNeill's countermand the quality of Connolly's military leadership of the Rising stands out as all the more heroic.

The failure to learn anything from Connolly's attempt to bring the working class to the lead of the national freedom struggle was further shown in the abstention of the ITUC & LP in the 1918 elections. The core of the class-collaboration involved here, in the interest of a spurious labour-movement unity, whose only foundation was its refusal to openly confront the national struggle as the political centrepiece of the working classes own struggle, is unwittingly betrayed in De Valera's statements of 1919 and 1921:

"When we wanted the help of Labour at Berne, Labour(i.e. ITUC & LP) gave it to us and got Ireland recognised as a distinct nation. When we wanted Labour to stand down at the election

(1918) and not divide us. But that we should stand four square against one enemy, Labour fell in with us"

It is not necessary for me to say - you know it so well - that were it not for the solidarity of Labour behind the national cause... the Irish cause would not be where it is to-day... We who are in a position to gauge the advance of the Irish cause... know what your support has been to us and what your refusal to put forward even your own interests has meant to the cause of Ireland in the past two years."

When our worst enemies praise our 'virtues' we know they must be vices from the viewpoint of our class. We see here the basic mistake of Labour, which Connolly strove so heroically to cure, praised to the skies by the arch bourgeois nationalist, De Valera. Had Connolly lived he certainly would have foreseen the crippling of independent working class politics by the all-class alliance for a united bourgeois republic and would have tried to redress it.

A similar refusal to put forward their own interests on the part of the Irish Citizen Army had fatally set in by this time. The position of Commandant of the ICA had been taken over by James O'Neill who turned out to have been selling the guns stolen by ICA members in the Docks etc to the IRA for personal gain - possibly as a plant of Sinn Fein/IRA Forces. As the IRA stepped up its guerilla fight against the British troops, given this atmosphere of disorientation and apathy in the ICA, many of the best members began to desert to the IRA - which was the aim of the IRA leadership and Sinn Fein. The most tragic irony, however, as Robbins' recollections show again and again is that ICA deserters could quote Connolly about the need to fuse the two armies as he led the ICA into the rising. The price of this forfeiture of class independence was being wrested with a vengeance.

The willingness of the anti imperialist section of the Irish working class to resort to direct action in strikes etc. and to generalise this in General strikes aimed directly at driving British Imperialists out of Ireland grew apace in the years from 1916 to 1920. The period 1919 / 20 is especially rich in the lessons of the use of direct workers action in the political strike. These are lessons which workers, seeing before their eyes to-day the growing inability of the mere physical force methods of the Provos to deliver a United Ireland, must learn. To do this the essentials of each strike are presented.

THE LIMERICK GENERAL STRIKE AGAINST BRITISH ARMY SPECIAL PERMITS

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After an arms find in the house of Bobby Byrne he was given twelve months hard labour. Once in prison he organised a campaign of disobedience to get Political Status. This ended in a riot in the prison in which police reinforcements beat up prisoners. When a protest by Limerick Trades Council brought no redress, a hunger strike occurred. After three weeks on it Byrne was removed to hospital with an armed guard. Sinn Fein attacked the hospital for his release and Byrne was shot and died. A funeral of 15,000 was flanked by armoured cars. Some days later Limerick was declared a special military area. Special permits had to be got from the British Commander before entering the city. The Limerick Trades Council declared a general strike against these permits and set up a strike committee. The aim of the strike was directly political - to protest and veto the right of the British Army to enforce permits on Limerick or Irish citizens as a condition of movement. The strike lasted twelve days and in the process of it the workers took control of the city and established their rule over movement, food etc. Only the refusal of the ITUC & LP bureaucracy to give a call to spread it into a national General Strike, coupled with the subterranean work of the Limerick Chamber of Commerce and the Bishop of Limerick, in the end forced the strike Committee to give in. Britain was aware, however, of the class dimensions of the Limerick General Strike and the potential it showed on the part of workers, given half an adequate leadership, to take the lead of the independence struggle. Shortly afterwards permits were withdrawn. That the rank and file leaders in Limerick knew the need to spread the strike to national proportions is shown in the 1919 ITUC and LP Conference, where the bureaucracy is censured for not organising a national protest. Johnston and company of course, knew that a successful call for a national general strike was a call to a worker-led insurrection against British National Oppression and that this was a dagger at the heart of the status quo in which he and his fellow bureaucrats existed as brokers. There was never any hope of such a course being consistently pursued by the ITUC & LP. Only a national rank and file movement of workers committees, under growing revolutionary communist leadership, could have taken up such a course and carried it to completion. Such did not exist.

MOTOR PERMITS STRIKE

Autumn 1919 saw another major political strike. It was in response to a decree by the British Government that all motor drivers obtain a permit - a device to deprive republicans of the use of motors. In response to this the Automobile Drivers Union (ADU) decided to call all its men out on the day the motor permit order went into operation. The other union, the ITGWU, allowed its members to continue at work but not to seek permits. The

ITUC & LP under the guise of trying to get unity in tactics tried to get the ADU to alter its all-out strike policy. It refused. Then the ITUC & LP was forced to support the action. The ensuing strike crippled Dublin traffic and much of traffic in other towns. The direct political anti-imperialist content of the strike is best conveyed in the words of the British Secretary of State - "The only argument the strikers were able to advance was that they objected to any restrictions being placed on them by an alien Government". The bureaucracy succeeded in getting this aim rejected for a policy of restricting it to motor vehicle drivers - while collecting strike fund from other unions - thereby defusing the potential for a general strike. The ADU refused this bureaucratic diversion and strove to spread the strike with big success. The Engineers and Steam Engine Drivers Union struck in sympathy. The ADU set up its own strike fund. This strike ended in failure after ten weeks. As in the Limerick strike, the leadership of the ADU and the ITUC & LP were correctly accused of inaction, negligence and diversion of the strike's potential. No new organs of the rank and file were created to be the seedbed of an alternative to the treacherous, pro-imperialist leadership of Johnston and company.

THE POLITICAL STATUS STRIKE

In April 1920 one hundred prisoners went on hunger strike in Mountjoy jail. The Viceroy said, much like Cooney in the 1977 Portlaoise strike, that they could die on it if they wanted. The ITUC & LP, smarting under accusations of having stabbed the Limerick and Motor Permits strike in the back, in order to keep its grip, was forced to call a general strike for the release of prisoners. It began the next day with massive response. Workers' committees took the control and distribution of food into their hands in many towns. The power of the strike weapon, especially the General Strike, was shown in the abject surrender of the British authorities and the release of the prisoners. The present crucial fight for political status, which every day comes out more clearly as a matter of hollow Republican stunts, must take a page from the copy of the Irish workers in 1919, if their fight is not to fail.

THE MUNITIONS TRANSPORT STRIKE

This strike arose when Dublin and Dun Laoghaire dockers refused to unload a British munitions ship on the direct political grounds that ~~these munitions~~ were for use in suppressing the Irish people and nation. The strike soon spread. British troops were used to unload the munitions. Then rail workers refused to move them. The railway members of the NUR, a British based union, were urged by the union bureaucracy in London to return to work in return for a special meeting of the British TUC to consider the Irish question. This was a move by the pro-imperialist British Union Bureaucracy to defuse and behead the strike.

JH Thomas, NUR Secretary, rushed to Dublin to police a return to work "so as that the whole question may be approached at our Bristol Conference without prejudice". He meant, of course, in a talk-shop atmosphere. In spite of all of this the Irish workers refused to carry any military goods or any troops carrying arms. Thomas and company responded by stopping union benefits to them. He sided with the troops of his own ruling class in nationally oppressing Ireland and Irish workers. The ITUC & LP on the other hand swiftly supported the dockers. Expressing the direct political aim of the strike it supported them as "refusing to be parties to the attempted re-conquest of Ireland" and launched a fund in support of the refusal. £120,000 was collected during the course of this strike which lasted seven months. On the otherhand the ITUC & LP bureaucracy struck a blow at the strike in not calling a strike of all railway men and deciding on a policy of allowing individual dismissals for refusal instead. Farren's words (he was a member of the Executive Committee) convey the heroism of the workers:

"It was a common practice for the military authorities to get up on the footplate of an engine and say to the driver "You have got to drive this train", put a revolver to his head and say " You will get the contents of this if you don't" and to the everlasting credit of the railway men they said 'NO' ".

Scabs came under fierce attack from pickets and the IRA. Tragically, the Citizen Army had so degenerated that the key role it could have filled, the armed defence of the pickets, fell to the tar and feathers of the IRA.

A special Conference of Labour organisations was held in November, 1920. A threat of a general strike of all rail traffic was imminent. The strike was declared to be a strike by the working class to "prevent the carrying of munitions of war to be used in the murder of our own people". A vote to continue was carried. Military activity was massively stepped up in the month following: Cork was partially burned out and martial law was declared in Limerick, Cork, Tipperary and Kerry. The British army paid special attention to smashing up the food committees organised by the workers and the transport nets under their control as these gave them elements of class dictatorship. The LPTUC bureaucrats grew more frightened each day. "In the light of changed conditions" they said, "a change of tactics was required". They called off the strike and advised the railmen to carry anything the British would risk. A call to hold ready to renew the strike disguised the Judas kiss of the Labour bureaucracy. The seven months' strike, however, had struck a cruel blow at the army of the occupation - forcing troops to be taken from repressive work to unloading munitions and diverting vehicles to the work of supplying stations.

CONCLUSION - THE LACK OF A REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY

Though undoubtedly one of the greatest Marxist working-class leaders in history, like most of his contemporaries including Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht (who both also perished in a failed uprising - in Germany 1918), Connolly lacked any direct and practical experience of the working-class struggle for state-power. Only Lenin and Trotsky at that time had this experience through first-hand involvement in the 1905 Revolution in Russia. It was an event that profoundly shaped their theoretical understanding of the absolute role of strategy and party:

1. a correct internationalist political strategy and tactics for to prepare the mobilisation of the masses in
 - a) building workers' councils
 - b) the fight for the united front of all workers parties,
 - c) the preparation for the general strike,
 - d) the slogan for a Workers' Government of all workers' parties, and
 - e) the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.
2. a vanguard mass workers Party created in the fight for such a strategy and tactics in all struggles of workers and the oppressed, and standing at the head of the working class as a whole.

Lacking this understanding, and deeply influenced by syndicalism, Connolly had no chance of winning, whatever the objective difficulties created by the war taking thousands of workers away to fight for their British oppressors, the setbacks to the working class movement, suffered following the failure to defeat the Lockout of 1913, and the overall weakness and divisions of the Irish working class movement at that time. Connolly lacked any clear revolutionary strategy to link the national struggle for the 'Republic' to the key task of directly mobilising workers in all parts of Ireland behind the fight for an Irish Labour Party.

For such a perspective he needed a clearer understanding of the absolute importance of the slogan for "the Constituent Assembly" as the political and democratic focus for all workers' struggles whether economic, social or political. With it he could have realised what in fact he failed to do - to dramatically recast the balance of class forces in Ireland against the British Imperialism and Irish capitalism by winning workers to the cause of Labour from the Unionist, Nationalist and Republican camps. The slogan for the unity of the working class as a political force and to raise the political and social stakes against all who stood for any kind of compromise with imperialism - and only labour had an alternative class interest in that battle, a class interest which would have increasingly defined both the means and the ends of the whole struggle was a crucial slogan at that moment.

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and for the Workers Republic.
Labour has waited long enough!
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"UNITY", THE LEFT AND THE UNITED FRONT

In the first edition of our journal a year ago, in an analysis of the Belfast R.A.C. and the Derry Irish Front we said that neither of these organisations could be the means to rebuilding a mass working class based movement on the streets. We argued such a position because we recognised that both these organisations (the first participated in by S.W.M., P.D./M.S.R. and the I.S.P., the other applauded by most of them uncritically) whatever the intentions about "unity" and "mass struggle" held by the participants, were subordinated politically and ideologically to the programme, strategy, and tactic of Irish nationalism - whether republican or green tory. As an alternative we argued for genuine United Front involving centrally anti-unionist trade unionists, socialists and republicans, in which joint action on specific issues around key demands would be the outcome of open, democratic debate and discussion about the best tactics, methods and strategies for taking the struggle forward. Only within this framework could each individual or group retain its own political and programmatic independence while combining in united joint action.

In "Class Struggle" No. 2, in a further analysis of why the R.A.C. was failing (the Irish Front, as we alone had predicted, collapsed) we attempted to outline our own programmatic perspective in which the task of building the United Fronts was related to the perspective of creating workers committees, the need for and emergence of armed fronts, the need for a Workers Government, the preparation of the general strike and the armed overthrow of the state - the dictatorship of the proletariat. The United Front therefore in this strategy is an integral part and method of a revolutionary socialist programme for workers' power in Ireland, and as the immediate tactic towards that goal we argued that United Front activity must centrally fight to employ strikes, sit-ins etc. as the key to bringing the most powerful weapons of our class into the struggle and at the same time opening it up to a six and thirty-two county Trade Union based perspective. Only within such a perspective can the Irish working class begin to challenge imperialism economically and politically; only in this way can the first steps towards the creation of an armed workers militia begin to take shape.

Despite the spate of conferences in Coalisland and Belfast and the general uncritical rapture the left here and internationally has characteristically accorded these, it is clear that our overall analysis has been completely vindicated. As we have shown elsewhere the left capitulated completely at Coalisland - engineered by the R.A.C., the Provisionals and I.R.S.P. (who always opposed the Coalisland initiative) confirmed the Provisionals' grip. To compound the issue and to rub it in, under the wing of the R.A.C. they orchestrated a mass demonstration in Belfast on February 28th at which none of the left were invited to speak.

"Republican News" triumphantly reported "the masses" complete support for the armed struggle and the R.A.C.'s total support for that as well. Finally, the setting-up of the "National Resistance Campaign" - the product of the Belfast conference, signalled the effective rout of the left. Its constitution states that the struggle for specific aims - political status, against special courts, British Army etc. is situated within the overall aim of "the right of the Irish people to self-determination and national sovereignty". It is a purely nationalist programme committing all who join it to such aims. No revolutionary socialist with any claim to the principle of an international class perspective and programme for national independence and workers' power can subordinate that programme to participation in the National Resistance Campaign and "Unity". But as we have shown again and again, the Irish Left's record of shameful betrayal of every principle is the major reason for the failure of an authentic marxist organisation to emerge in the last ten years. One of the major causes for this has been the absence of a correct understanding among the various groups of the nature and role of an international working class programme and the method of fighting for it in all struggles. Secondly, and related to this is the completely distorted understanding of the United Front which gives rise to the opportunist practice flowing from it.

THE UNITED FRONT

The United Front is a tactic historically created by revolutionary Marxists in struggle. It consists basically in an agreement reached between different parties or organisations which have different programmes for joint action on specific issues. In this agreement there is absolutely no question of a common political programme (like the National Resistance Campaign).

Each organisation

- i) retains intact its entire programme
- ii) retains its right to put it forward
- iii) retains the right to criticise other organisations in the United Front agreement, either in general for their anti-working class perspectives, their incorrect tactics, their ideological backwardness or their failure to carry out properly the United Front Agreement.

Therefore in the United Front each organisation guards its full independence while at the same time the widest possible unity can be achieved for carrying through actions objectively made necessary by the circumstances of the struggle. Through it the widest possible forces are organised and at the same time the masses are given the opportunity to debate, discuss and compare in action the worth and dependability of the ideas and methods of the various organisations and parties which strive for their

allegiance. The United Front, therefore, is the means whereby revolutionary Marxists fight for access for their ideas and methods in the broad mass arena - thus it is a method for confronting politically and ideologically the anti- or non-working class tactics and strategy, ideas and methods still holding sway over the working class, on the principled basis that only a marxist programme can represent correctly the historic interests of the working class against capitalism and imperialism, and for socialism, in Ireland and elsewhere.

To subordinate one's own programme to a "common" programme, is to subordinate the historic and class interests of the proletariat to the false programmes and methods of other social forces. In the situation in the North traditional republicanism represents the most serious obstacle to the creation of a truly internationalist working class perspective and of the Party crystallised in the fight for workers' power in Ireland. It is for that reason above all that traditional republicanism will oppose tooth and nail the creation of genuine United Fronts because it, unlike the so-called Marxist left, recognises correctly that such fronts would, if set up, be the basis for a real political challenge to the domination of traditional republicanism in the North, politically, ideologically and militarily.

The Irish Left may formally acknowledge adherence to the above interpretation of the United Front. In their paper at one time or another one will come across a formally correct position spelt out. But it is a mark of centrism to make pious speeches on Sundays about principles and ignore them for the rest of the week. At no time in practice have the far left ever fought for the United Front - the Belfast R.A.C. never permitted the right to criticise the Provisionals' bombing campaign or anything else. At Coalisland Mrs. McAliskey stood over a decision by the organising committee, on which the I.S.P. had a member, to prevent any criticism of any organisation. The National Resistance Campaign in which the left will participate, is not a United Front.

In his speech at Coalisland Michael Farrell (P.D.) revealed the "method" behind much of the lefts' practice. According to Farrell, "reformist" organisations (meaning the S.D.L.P. and I.I.P.) "should not be frightened by the prospects of co-operating with revolutionary and other groups - they could all gain by uniting on limited demands, because they might achieve those demands" Here Farrell has completely destroyed the whole principle of the United Front as a political method of Marxists fighting both for unity in action with the broadest number of people and simultaneously of the struggle as a whole. In order to do this correctly, the United Front must challenge openly and directly the grip of all anti- and non-working class forces. (Farrell opportunistically said nothing about the actual grip of the Provisionals). To say, as he does, that reformists have "nothing to fear" is either stupidity or trickery. The latter is more likely, for the MSR/PD group operates with a notion of the United Front that it is a trick

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COALISLAND - TIME TO CALL A SPADE A SPADE

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In the number of people attending - about 500 - the Coalisland conference was something of a success. In terms of clarifying the basic political issues of what programme and strategy can rebuild a shattered mass movement it was an abysmal failure. Organisationally, too, the outcome in the form of the National Resistance Campaign, a thoroughly petty-bourgeois nationalist front demanding "self-determination for the Irish people", has hardly justified the effort of Coalisland even in the eyes of some of its leading members. The meeting took place five months ago on January 22nd and even yet the organisers have refused to admit its failure, covering their tracks by pointing to the fine resolution passed and sighing with fateful resignation about the inevitability of the outcome (in fact not one of over a dozen resolutions had a significant minority against, and some contradicted others). . . Bernadette Mc Aliskey puts it thus in Intercontinental Press, May 1st, :

"A number of crucial resolutions were discussed at the meeting and passed" (sic)

"Since the Provisionals have the only effective organisation, it was natural that most of the immediate building power from the conference would fall to them, and sadly they're not doing a great deal with it. But I think that was inevitable..." (our emphasis; pp 514/15).

The organisers, among them Cde. Mc Aliskey's Independent Socialist Party, did not permit those present to discuss and debate fraternally and critically the real questions that, after all, were responsible for bringing the meeting together in the first place -

- (1) why has the mass movement on the streets declined?
- (2) why have initiatives to rebuild that mass movement, like the RACs and the Irish Front, failed to do so?
- (3) Why is the war in a total impasse?

Thus it was not possible, in the light of debate and discussion, out of which valuable lessons of past failures and mistakes can both be understood and avoided in the future, to hammer out a clear strategy and programme of demands. Instead, the organisers opted for a conference which concealed and blurred the issues in the interest of a spurious organisational unity. First, Bernadette Mc Aliskey announced that no criticism of any organisation would be permitted - and this from a revolutionary socialist at a conference claiming to defend democratic rights! The result of this disgraceful ruling, worthy of the worst trade union bureaucrat, was to work against the interests of the small socialist forces present (those at least who still maintain some belief in socialist principles) in favour of the anti-working class forces of SDLP, IIP, the Catholic Church, and the non-working class forces of the Provisionals and I.R.S.P.

The organisation of the conference was bound to be a shambles from then on, for if you rule out criticism, then, logically, resolutions from different political organisations embodying different ideas of what is the correct (and incorrect) way forward cannot be debated and voted on their merits by conference members. Therefore, rejecting a procedural motion from the Derry Branch of S.L.P. (promoted by IWG in that branch) to change the undemocratic format and permit debate on resolutions, the organisers decided to allow anyone to speak for 3 minutes "around" the general issues of "repression" etc. and at the end of two 1½-hour sessions of this kind of thing,

they put all the resolutions in a bunch. As there had been no debate on resolutions all that were read out were passed, signifying more confusion than clarity, for some called for "International" campaigns while others called for local or trade union based committees.

Almost the last resolution passed by the conference was one from the Belfast Relatives Action Committee (the central committee) calling almost immediately another conference of delegates from the organisations present at Coalisland; and the determination of Provisional Sinn Fein, the IRSP and the Red Republicans to have this conference (which has taken place since) as the basis for the "real" 32-County campaign, revealed that under all the platitudes and euphoria about "unity" at Coalisland there lay a lot of differences about how to build the movement again. By refusing to "open" the conference to debate resolutions, the I.S.P. and other organisers played into the manipulations and manoeuvres of the Provisionals and the IRSP in the RACs who see any attempt by the left to build a campaign against repression as a threat to the political leadership, tactics and strategy of republican organisations. Thus, the Belfast RAC and its republican supporters initially did not support the proposed Coalisland conference, and in being compelled to attend for fear of appearing as splitters, they did so only to make sure that the RACs were not displaced from the organising and political leadership. Hence their eagerness to get another conference off the ground immediately which would prevent the ISP and the left from upstaging the RAC. The Coalisland organisers did not see that the republican stranglehold on all attempts to build any kind of movement is both political and fatal (as the Irish Front and RACs show), and therefore has to be fought openly and politically before the members of conferences such as that one, and elsewhere, in the only way that is possible and principled (that is, by forcing them to debate and argue on resolutions for different strategies and methods),

The IWG Tendency believes that the whole nub of the question of how to rebuild the movement on the streets against repression, and ultimately against the British Army in arms, revolves around whether it is to be the revolutionary socialist strategy which is fought for or the republican one. The revolutionary socialist strategy places the anti-unionist working class to the fore as workers and trade unionists as the key to both effective action now (in strikes, sit-ins etc.) and later winning support and solidarity from sections of southern workers. The republican-based strategy uses "tame" fronts like the RACs, continues with a military and political strategy (in particular the bombing campaign) which remains totally divorced from the active relationship of forces both North and South at the present moment, as from the social and economic struggles of workers everywhere in Ireland. This "strategy", even if it could rebuild some kind of mass movement (say in a civil war situation) would still leave the Irish working class struggle for workers power as secondary and in the event of a united Ireland, the 'vacuum' would not be filled by the Provos' "democratic socialism" but by Irish capitalism tied to imperialism economically and viciously anti-working class.

The Irish revolutionary left for six years has ducked these fundamental questions of programme and strategy and the political tactics that flow from them. Despite adhering to the theoretical principle that "only the Irish working class can defeat imperialism", inscribed on their banners, when it comes to concrete issues like how to build a committee such principles are forgotten in the opportunist belief that getting on a "tame" platform with the Provisionals will get them nearer to the masses. As six years have revealed,

they win neither recruits nor respect from republicans or workers anywhere! Coalisland was just one more stunt by the Irish left groups the last being the "anti-imperialist" unity conference in the Green Briar a year previously. They avoid the confrontation with the Provisionals strategy and tactics, a necessary political confrontation.

At Coalisland it took a worker member of the Provisional Sinn Fein to do just that, and the support he got from his speech revealed that the anti-unionist population are ready to listen to new ideas and methods. The IWG/Derry SLP put a resolution at Coalisland to build TUCAR as the basis for united fronts of workers, socialists and republicans in which open debate before the masses, as the only way to politically combat apathy and confusion, is recognised as a principle of joint action. The motion was not put by McAliskey (in the chair) until, under pressure from shouts from the floor, she reluctantly recognised its existence (it had been circulated in leaflets). She put it as an offhanded formality as the hall was emptying, and less than twenty people knew sufficient of what was going on to raise their hands either way. It was possible for her to get away with this because there had been no serious discussion.

The Irish Workers Group therefore restates that the Socialist Labour Party should not join fronts in which no democratic right exists to argue for how it sees the whole struggle progressing. At the moment the RAC's platform does not constitute a genuine united front structure incorporating the principle of each organisations or individual's right to argue openly for different perspectives and methods around common demands. We must always demand the right to say what we stand for and the other forces, non working class or anti-working class, really stand for. A "no criticism" platform offers them a fig-leaf for their "politics" which still dominate the anti-unionist working class. The united front of workers, socialists and republicans is the only way in which their domination and the domination of the Provisionals' "physical force" strategy can be replaced by the Irish working class. That is what Connolly left us to do. By that criterion we will be judged by the Irish Proletariat.

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to outsmart the reformists and the Provisionals. In reality, such a method is the result of the left's purely organisational concept of the United Front - because they lack understanding of its political function, they are forced to try to manoeuvre the reformists and the Provisionals into unity with all kinds of blandishments about "common interests" and "you have nothing to fear", "we will all benefit". Inevitably, such methods trap the trappers, not the other way round as the failure of the left to learn any of the lessons of N.I.C.R.A. clearly shows. No amount of craven opportunism, no amount of trickery and blandishment can avoid the fact that the fight to build a mass revolutionary workers' party to achieve workers' power here, cannot turn its back on 125 years of working class international struggle and the priceless lessons of strategy and tactics it has given us. The United Front is just one tactic we need to begin to put it into action.

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TUCAR

DUCKING THE ISSUE ONCE AGAIN...

The second TUCAR (Trade Union Campaign Against Repression) conference on February 19 (it was founded in July '77) revealed that while there is clearly disquiet among its members about its failures so far to emerge as a real focus for trade union action against repression, there still remains deep confusion about what really lies at the root of it, and more generally, in the light of the Coalisland and Belfast conferences, what is the relationship of TUCAR to the other initiatives being set up.

The indication of its failure was the poor turn-out at the conference which again reflected the overall dominance of left-wing groups, republicans and their supporters. The general anxiety felt by the membership was expressed in the fair number of motions criticising the Administrative Committee. Furthermore, the conference rejected a bureaucratic attempt by the A.C. to prevent debate and discussion on the record of TUCAR by trying to define IWG motions as invalid for seeking to amend the aims.

In his opening address, the Secretary, B. Trench of S.W.M. and NUJ tried to defend TUCAR's record by arguing that in the circumstances where a new government adopted a "softly, softly" approach including concessions, the setting up of a "safeguards" committee and the ICTU chief's presence on it, it was very difficult to get TUCAR's "message" over to the working class and Trade Unionists. This complacent apology conveniently ignored the fact that all of the government's manoeuvres were to be expected. What TUCAR had to do, therefore, from its very inception, was to make sure that its programme and strategy included demands and a perspective of direct workers' action which would sharply cut through the illusions and confusion peddled by both the government and Trade Union bureaucrats. This perspective could only be founded on a demand for a Trade Union-based Inquiry into torture and prisons, under rank and file inspection and control. Instead, at its first conference, as reported in Class Struggle 2, TUCAR opted for an "independent" inquiry (i.e. a "non-class" inquiry in a class system!) which was indistinguishable from the "independent" and "public" inquiries demanded by Amnesty, Prisoners Rights organisation and "Irish Civil Rights Association", all of which have no perspective of working class action but instead rely upon the "respectable" pressure of lawyers and other professionals, including the clergy. (The ICRA "public inquiry" or tribunal was "convened by the Rev. Piaras O'Duill" and supported by TUCAR!) The only aim of such inquiries is thoroughly reformist - to get the laws changed, thus deepening workers' illusions in the "neutrality" of the state and its laws as the protector of "our" interests. They render any action by workers if and when it occurs as secondary and auxiliary to manoeuvres and pressures of liberal lawyers and priests to win reforms and concessions.

It is this wretched blurring of the issues at the very centre of TUCAR's programme that accounts for its purely "pressure-group" perspective - tailing liberal organisations "to get more information". There have been many issues in addition to the Liffey Dockyards case - the IRSP Four, Gouldings, Tynagh etc. which would have created the basis for rank and file support for TUCAR if an attempt had been made to mobilise TUCAR members for active resistance to government measures. Even the TUCAR marches in Belfast around the brutal death in custody of Brian Maguire in Castlereagh, marking a major advance for TUCAR, were seriously compromised by the relationship of Belfast TUCAR to the RACs, a relationship which flows directly from the confusion evident at the February conference. If TUCAR had been built in the perspective we fought for from before its

before its formal launching, it is doubtful that the R.U.C. would still have been consigning their detainees to unexplained death as has happened twice this month alone, an indication of the contempt they can afford to show for the great fight-back so vaunted by the MSR.

TUCAR's paper membership of 200 may have reflected a real increase over nine months, but what progress in reality has this meant? Many of those present had little time for political analysis, preferring to believe that a bit better organisation, more hard work and a willingness to work with all progressive forces in "broad fronts" would solve the problem.

The conference rejected a confused motion from the LWR group which argued for a "public inquiry" in the South "where illusions in the state by the working class still existed". This blatant opportunistic logic was defended on the basis that even though such a public inquiry would be a whitewash, it would provide enough material for the revolutionary left to propagandise and agitate among the masses for action "to free the prisoners". No explanation was given of just how the tiny revolutionary forces could mobilise the "judgement of the masses" to such fantastic revolutionary action in circumstances where it is openly admitted that the masses still have deep illusions in the state; where the "public inquiry" will be a whitewash; where the demand for a public inquiry cannot mobilise workers; and where the whitewash will be defended not only by the media, church etc. but also by the Trade Union Bureaucracy against whom we will have created neither resistance nor an alternative. The embarrassing gap between the reformist demand for a "public inquiry" justified on the grounds that the masses are full of illusions in the state, and the phantasy mass revolutionary action to free the prisoners, is overcome by the LWR invoking their standard get-out to justify naked opportunism - "a revolutionary crisis" or "catastrophic" collapse of the system, in which the masses will be instantly and magically mobilised thus saving LWR the task of fighting against the stream of reformism and nationalism in the working class movement for their 1938 Programme.

The membership also rejected the IWG resolution for a trade union based inquiry, North and South, under rank and file inspection and control as the basis for a real fight against the state and sellouts by the Trade Union Bureaucracy. Only the working class has a class interest in fighting repression, namely to bring it closer, through direct action, to a realisation of the nature of the whole rotten system in all its parts: parliament, laws, prisons, army, police etc. The SWM group and the MSR/PD group repeatedly state in their papers that they support this perspective also, yet as soon as they face a concrete instance, like TUCAR, which offers them the possibility of fighting for it among rank and file workers, they opportunistically find other "worthy" forces for whose participation in the struggle they are prepared to drop their principles of working class demands and direct action. In the case of MSR/PD it has become a principle to dilute every struggle to the lowest common denominator of "unity" even to the point of unity with the pro-capitalist Gaelic League, Catholic groups, and even their political masters Fianna Fail.

~~SWM said in their Socialist Worker Review that what characterised their politics as distinct from all other groups was~~

"that it is only the working class who can and must make the revolution for its own class objectives. This has not been some abstract political ideal but rather has informed the movement's whole method. It has consistently fought for workers' action in the here and now to defend victims of state repression, to cut the dole queues, to achieve women's rights"

At TUCAR's first conference, after 6 months of IWG arguing the position of a trade union and labour movement inquiry under rank and file control, SWM put a resolution for a trade union inquiry (suitably adjusted so as not to mention political prisoners or the rank and file). They lost then in TUCAR in July, having spent the pre-launching meetings deferring silently to the LWR position and attacking ours. Now at the February meeting they voted against our call and supported the existing formula of an "independent" inquiry with "trade union representation" - the one they previously opposed. They also supported the ICRA-organised inquiry while we strongly urged a critical attitude to it.

We ask the SWM and its supporters in the SLP, why do you oppose your own stated principles in TUCAR?

The answer to this question may be better understood if we consider the position taken by TUCAR on the emergence of the Coalisland conference and its follow-up meeting. Coalisland objectively reflected the growing protests in the North against repression. In response to these protests and to the failure of direct rule and its Power-sharing hopes, the anti-working class SDLP and IIP, and the non-working class Provisional forces, had intensified their manoeuvring. In relating to these forces, Coalisland, as we argue elsewhere, botched the chance of providing an alternative trade-union based fight against torture on the principle of united fronts with other political and social forces. Instead, and the follow-up in Belfast clinched, the RACs, under the domination of the Provos politically, and of their non-working-class perspective for "building a mass movement", remain as the major organisational focus. TUCAR has simply opted for alliance with RACs on conditions that do not permit TUCAR members to argue, debate and criticise the counterproductive military tactics of the bombing campaign or the non-working-class politics of the Provos. In effect TUCAR is tailing the petit-bourgeois nationalists and their perspectives in the RACs. In Belfast TUCAR members are also RAC members to a large extent. In such a situation the working class will remain as secondary and auxiliary to the Provos and can never be brought to the forefront of the national struggle.

To get around this opportunism SWM argued (against the LWR's motion to prevent TUCAR joining any platform including SDLP or IIP) that TUCAR was a "non-political" organisation with very limited demands and perspectives for trade unionists and therefore, joint action and unity with anyone was a good thing for the struggle. When IWG members were in SWM up to 1975, one of the major points of difference we had with the leadership was over the SDLP. We argued that United Fronts must put demands on that party. The leadership totally opposed "this peddling illusions in bourgeois nationalists". Now they are prepared to join the SDLP and IIP on committees which do not even offer them the right to distinguish their politics from these bourgeois nationalists. We ask the SWM leadership to explain their remarkable change of perspective and principle to their members and supporters and to the SLP in general.

(Furthermore, how can the SWM defend a position that sees a trade union organisation like TUCAR as "non-political"?)

The IWG supported the LWR motion and put forward our own perspective of TUCAR as the basis for building United Fronts North and South as the first serious step to replace at the head of the national struggle the petit-bourgeois nationalists with the working class. Both SWM and LWR voted against! Though defeated, we will continue to fight for this perspective, the only road for a revolutionary workers party in Ireland.

LWR - CENTRISTS

FACING TWO WAYS ON REPRESSION

"It is the task of the Marxists and revolutionaries to prepare for that crisis by fighting for the independence of the working class and all the exploited from the bourgeoisie, for a workers' movement against repression and imperialism. We begin from the organisation of the working class, and, on the basis of its strength and independence, proceed to revolutionary collaboration with other exploited elements".

- Workers Republic (March/April, p.19).

"What the IWG.... failed to take account of was the fact that the government itself was opposed tooth and nail to any public enquiry" (therefore) "a trade union enquiry, while obviously correct at a given stage, was inappropriate at present when what was posed was precisely taking up the fight against the T.U. bureaucracy in the call on them to demand a public enquiry as part of the task of destroying illusions in that bureaucracy"..

"The effect of the IWG's proposals" .. (for a T.U. enquiry under rank and file control and inspection).. "would be to deflect the fight against the bureaucracy, the real issue, into a mindless scurrying about on a rank and file level".

-W.R. March/April. pp 7/8.

Workers Republic, organ of the League for a Workers Republic, Irish section of the O.C.R.F.I. carried two articles on the fight against repression - on the March TUCAR conference and the January Coalisland anti-repression meeting. The two articles focus on the political basis of both initiatives quite correctly in terms of the need to defend the independent class interests of the working class in any joint action with anti-working-class or non-working-class forces. LWR correctly shows up the shameless trampling on this principle by the MSR/PD group, the SWM and the ISP for whom, it appears, such an elementary principle of Marxist internationalism has become "sectarian jargon".

However, as our two quotes from WR reveal, LWR itself is capable of a centrist equivocation on the same principle. Underneath the rhetoric, as we have shown elsewhere in writing about TUCAR, LWR's demand for a state public enquiry is utterly reformist, incapable of mobilising workers and impotent before what now LWR recognise as an important danger to the working class, the Trade Union Bureaucracy. This marked the first reference by them, in eleven months of arguing their demand, to any question of destroying illusions in the T.U. bureaucracy! Instead of asserting that the demand for a "public enquiry" will be the

basis of breaking such illusions, we demand of LWR to explain how in any way it can do this!

We are fully certain they won't be able to do so.

Their disgraceful remark about the IWG demand for a trade union enquiry leading to "mindless scurrying about in the rank and file" reveals the hypocrisy behind their criticism of MSR/PD for ignoring the working class. Thus, at the end of a long section attacking correctly the MSR/PD for seeking unprincipled alliances with everybody but the working class, they say:

"No, the only way to ensure the building of a successful movement against repression which will be led to oppose imperialism is to put at the centre the building of an anti-repression movement within the organisation of the working class. The existence of a strong workers' movement against repression is a precondition for the creation of a united front.." (WRno.68p.18).

We ask the LWR and its supporters, how is this movement to be built on a reformist demand for a public enquiry by the state? How if not among the rank and file workers? Among whom if not them? We don't preclude any part of the Labour Movement, trade union, or L.P. branches, trades councils etc. in this perspective nor have we ever relented on the need to place demands on the trade union bureaucracy. But all the real struggles against repression in the South have involved rank and file workers - the strikes against the Emergency, in defence of hunger strikers, for the release of men at Tynagh, the defiance of the Forcible Entry Act etc. How can LWR contemptuously ignore the fact that only the rank and file workers have shown so far any willingness to struggle.

Revolutionaries have a duty to provide strategy upon which a mass struggle can be built. A movement unclear in its demands and slogans and unwilling to give a lead through action will convince no one, nor will it expose the bureaucracy.

L.W.R.'s bogus championing of the "working class organisations" is a superficial cover for a "revolutionary" strategy which is directed to building an all-Ireland reformist Labour Party. Under the blows of "world crisis", it is argued by the LWR, the masses will return to the Labour Party inside which the LWR will be patiently and quietly developing its strength. Until that is a real possibility, the LWR must avoid at all costs any action which their perspective document 1977 says "would be trying to speed up events"... "which would only serve to isolate Trotskyists from the masses" (W.R. 65 p. 27).

The masses, for the LWR, are the Labour Party! This utterly passive and unprincipled position is the root of LWR's opportunism before the trade union and Labour Party bureaucracy in the South. But it is also the root of their passivity and opportunism before the petit-bourgeois republican movement.

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FRANCE

REVOLUTIONARIES & THE UNION OF THE LEFT

THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY

In the last twenty years Labour and Social Democratic parties have become normal Government parties in many advanced European countries. Since 1947 however, there have been no Government places for the CPs with the 'fringe' exceptions of Iceland and Finland. This was not because the CP Ministers in France and Italy in the '45 - '47 years had done anything very radical. On the contrary in France they backed De Gaulle. They froze the struggle against the German occupying army, as struggle which contained the seeds of a successful armed battle for workers' power (because of the leading role of the workers in it) within the straight-jacket of their aim of re-establishing bourgeois democracy. The basic political principle from which this strategy flowed was "socialism in a single country". It contained a stageist theory of the 'revolutionary process' - first re-establish bourgeois democracy - then, in a distinct stage fight for a workers republic. This limitation of the struggle entailed in turn the counter-revolutionary act which the CP is most exposed by - their presiding over the disarming of the French and Italian workers as the war ended. No other party had the prestige among the workers to wean them to give up their arms. Once the CP had done this in France and Italy it had rendered the basic service the bourgeoisie needed from it to re-establish bourgeois order. Ironically the time had come for Washington and the French and Italian bosses to put the CPs to grass. This they did with indecent haste. Thorez (Marchais' predecessor) in an interview with the London Times was startlingly frank about the CP's "achievement"

"It is clear that the Communist Party, in its action as part of the Government, and within the framework of the parliamentary system it had helped to re-establish, will hold strictly to the democratic programme which has won for it the confidence of the masses of the people". (London Times November 18th, 1946.)

Here we see the CP leader affirming that his party will stay within constitutional limits and will struggle within the confines indicated to it by finance capital, aided by its police, judges, politicians and bishops. Because, however, of the illusions still reposed in it due to its imagined continuation from the Russian Revolution and the enormous obstacle this posed to the Fourth International, because of the political degeneration of the Fourth International during the war and especially in France, and because of the often heroic role of the CP rank and file in the resistance, the CP came out of the war as the mass party of the industrial workers in France.

It has now upwards of six hundred thousand members. Generally it has got about 20% of the votes. Yet since it was ousted in 1947 it has never had a place in Government. However, more and more, the bourgeois respectability of the CP is being admitted by the bourgeoisie. The proof is impressive.

Apart from confining the workers' resistance to bourgeois limits, and, consequently, disarming them once the Germans were defeated, the post-war history of the CP is a chain of betrayals which flow from its counter-revolutionary essence as a Stalinist party.

From Thorez's famous 'shirkers' speech in 1943 attacking the "wild cat" miners who dared to go on unofficial strike, through the CP's condemnation of the fight for national independence in Algeria as a "fascist conspiracy" to their counter-revolutionary action in the 1968 General Strike in France, the CP's role is one of class collaboration and betrayal of the struggle for workers' power.

But the bourgeoisie feels uneasy with the CPs in Government, and especially in left governments such as a Union of the Left would be in a different way than with the social democratic parties. The basis of this suspicion is the continuing links of CPs with the USSR. If the Soviet Union and the East European states were toppled in a new working class revolution on the model of the 1956 Hungarian uprising to establish a series of workers states based on workers councils and militias, then the floor would fall out from under every Communist Party. The CPs, however much they play it down to creep stealthily into Government positions, depend in their programmes on the view that socialism is being achieved in the USSR and East European countries. Politically, they are centred on the need to support the extended 'communist' world emerging from World War Two, centred on the USSR and the Russian Army, against all attempts to destroy it whether from within or without.

The reformism of the Second International Social Democratic parties, on the other hand, is based on lessening the evil effects of capitalism on the workers within individual nations, and accumulating those gains so as to end up one fine day with socialism. These parties do not depend on the view that socialism has been achieved in any country and therefore are much more free of contradictions in pursuing the unequivocal policies of their own bourgeoisie in the international arena.

It is this that explains the contradictory zig-zagging by the French CP between muted criticisms of the denial of democratic rights in Eastern Europe and the USSR and the equally muted retention of the view that socialism exists and is proceeding in these countries. But it also throws light on a still more explosive contradiction, that between the foreign policy of the USSR and that of their own bourgeoisie - expressed in the arms race between the NATO and Warsaw Pact blocs. This is a latent contradiction. But what has kept it so is the fact that the CPs in France and Italy, etc. have not passed over into the executive agents of the bourgeoisie as have the parties of the Second International. If the CP had gained power in a Union of the Left government in France this contradiction would become explosively actual as the CP leadership were

faced in practice with the foreign policy the French bourgeoisie wanted and that which the Warsaw pact wanted, not least in trade. 31

It is these facts that explain the peculiar reluctance of the bourgeoisie to allow CPs into Government and the shirking from power that characterises the CPs. Added to this is the knowledge by the leadership of the French CP that a victory in the elections would probably open up a pre-revolutionary situation in France similar to that which Popular Unity's victory opened up in 1970 in Chile. Given the brutal failure of the "peaceful road" in Chile this must be a frightening prospect for them.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY

The SP was the first mass party of the working class in France. All its main leaders supported the first world war and thus came under the lash of Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg and Liebknecht - fighting then to prepare a new International. After the War the SP swung sharply left and in 1920 its majority voted to affiliate to the Third International - thus forming the French CP. Only a rump of 30,000 carried on as the SP. Due chiefly to the disastrous policies of the Comintern as it came more and more under the sway of Stalin's principle of "Socialism in a single country" the SP had recovered sufficiently by 1936 to become the Government Party at the head of the Popular Front - a front which was supported by the CP but did not include CP Ministers. At the start of the Second World War the SP parliamentary deputies voted to expel the CP deputies from the Assembly and to grant full powers to the Nazi stooge Petain.

As the labour movement recovered from the war the SP was very much weaker in the French working class than the CP. However, it had lost its base in the unions and had become more and more a purely parliamentary bourgeois party. It was savagely anti-communist, followed a policy of coalitions with the centre and right wing parties, like the recent Coalition here, and backed France's war of national oppression in Algeria. By the late sixties its membership was down to 60,000. It fell to its lowest ebb in the '69 presidential elections, its candidate getting only 5% of the vote. At this point, Francois Mitterand, a veteran bourgeois politician, who never previously claimed to be socialist, took the party in hand. Revived and re-organised, the SP had become (until its setback in the recent elections) the strongest party in France in electoral terms. It also regained some important trade union links chief of which is the CFDT. Most of these gains were reflections of the treachery of the CP particularly in the '68 General Strike. The SP remains much more petit-bourgeois in support than the CP and its worker supporters tend to the white-collar. The CP is in the deepest sense a bourgeois workers party. It is reformist and bourgeois-dedicated to preserving bourgeois democracy, in leadership and programme. But it is the industrial working class in the base and in the expectations reposed in it by the masses of factory workers. The SP is a workers party in a less deep sense. It too is pro-capitalist in leadership and programme but working class in base in a degenerated sense but in the important sense that masses of workers vote for it and big unions are affiliated to it. As such it is a vital and intrinsic link in the main safety valve of the French capitalist system - reformism. It is counter revolutionary in leadership as is the CP.

THE UNION OF THE LEFT AND THE COMMON PROGRAMME.

The CP and the SP are caught on the contradiction at the heart of all reformist workers parties between what the working class supporters expect of them in terms of class measures and what the bourgeoisie expect of them in terms of policing the workers and functioning as a safety valve for the crisis-ridden capitalist system. The Union of the Left and the Common Programme is the product of these contradictory pressures on the CP, SP and Left Radicals.

What then is the Common Programme?

First of all it is a thoroughly reformist programme.

It envisages considerable nationalisation of banks and industrial enterprises, but with compensation. To compensate the Banks rather than expropriating them is only to displace the vital problem of access to the massive centralised credit which is necessary to set measures in motion in the interests of millions of workers and peasants. To compensate for industries to be nationalised, as the Union of the Left propose to do, would be a ruinous operation that would create utterly unbearable hardships for the new regime right from the start and that would thus dampen and confuse the enthusiasm of labouring millions, as in Chile. The Union of the Left pretends to want to transform society but begins with total recognition that capitalist property is sacrosanct.

Secondly, despite a lot of rhetoric about 'autogestation' (self-management) the Common Programme lays no stress on workers control in the sense of workers' veto exerted from below by the labouring masses over the management of nationalised industries. Only such control from below, as the whole history of the struggle of the Russian workers in 1917, of the Chilean workers in the 1970-1973 period and of the Portuguese workers in '74-'75 shows, can lay the basis for a possible transition to the proletarian dictatorship in the economy. No such revolutionary mass transition is prepared in the reformist and tame Common Programme. On the contrary, a parliamentary process of bit-by-bit reforms is what is explicitly outlined - legal acquisitions from above implemented by a bureaucratic government apparatus and handed over to management by bureaucrats. This reformist picture of bureaucratic management of nationalised industries, with no workers' control from below, finds its main advocate in the CP and its capstone in the recent removal of any mention of the basic Marxist goal of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' from the CPs programme.

Thirdly, the Common Programme is thoroughly nationalist. It would lead inevitably to protectionist measures, import controls etc. This directly plays into the hands of one section of the French capitalists, the home-market-oriented section in their efforts to blame workers in other countries for the crisis of their system. As well as this economic nationalism

of the Common Programme there is the related political nationalism. This is an accommodation to the most reactionary chauvinist views and a total denial of proletarian internationalism. Part two of the Programme poses the task as one of democratisation of the institutions of the Fifth Republic, parliament, police, judiciary and army, not to prepare for their destruction and replacement by the organs of workers rule, workers councils and militia. The logical outcome of all this is support for the Sovereignty of the French state and Parliament and for NATO and defence of France's role as a nuclear power - a defense in which the CP's capitulation to French chauvinism takes the lead. "Workers of the world unite" is treated as a hoary joke in this programme.

Fourthly, when we ask the acid-test question "Does the Common Programme aim to renovate the French economy or replace it with another?" the answer stands out crystal clear. The Common Programme aims to renovate and even "democratise" the French economy. The latter aim is illusory and utopian. The former is thoroughly reactionary. The French economy can only be "renovated" at the expense of the workers and small farmers of France.

Fifthly, the composition of the Union of the Left, the Union that would have to implement the Common Programme, includes the Left Radicals - an explicitly bourgeois party. They showed this clearly in being the first to begin the sabotage of the Common Programme last Autumn and again in refusing to support the best placed candidates in the second round in Aisne Chad, etc. because these were CP. Prior to this they had made a pact with the SP against the CP in a whole range of constituencies. And since the elections they have scuttled the Union of the Left in the hope of being taken under Giscard's wing. Why then were they included in the Union of the Left? This question is even more pointed when one remembers that the far-left were excluded yet they got 3.5% of the vote in the first round as against only 1.5% for the Left Radicals. The answer is that the SP and CP leadership wanted them in the Union because with bourgeois allies in it it is easier to reject the demands of the workers and the perspective of mass struggle to implement the programme. With these in Government the CP and SP leadership would be able to effectively say to the workers and small farmers, as they said in Chile in exactly similar circumstances, "We must tone this down! We will frighten away the Left Radicals and bring down the Union of the Left Government". The politics of Stalinism and Social Democracy is in essence the same everywhere. One needs only to remember Roy Johnston's repudiation of industrial action by the catholic workers in Derry in '69 and '70 in case it might frighten off Hume or Cooper. The presence of the Left Radicals in the Union is the signal to the French bourgeoisie of the intention of the CP-SP leadership to preserve the institutions of the bosses' state intact. The Left Radicals are the pocket-compass of the CP and SP to keep them correctly oriented in their class collaboration.

THE UNION OF THE LEFT-OUR ATTITUDE AND THAT OF OTHER GROUPS.

Despite all the above factors, given a situation in which the Union of the Left was forced by its rank and file to realise the basic demands of the Common Programme on Nationalisation, Jobs and Minimum Wages, there can be no doubt that an explosion of combativity would arise. A victory for the Union of the Left would most likely produce such a situation. This would be a pre-revolutionary situation right at the heart of one of the main world capitalist blocs - the EEC. This is by far the most important fact to grasp. But does this not involve us in the "lesser-evilism" of saying that as between the right and the Union of the Left we support the latter as the lesser evil?

By no means!

We do however say the Union of the Left victory in the elections is the lesser evil. However in proposing a programme for a fight against the greater evil we do not support the lesser evil. We reject the USFI position and that of its Irish section MSR of critical support for the Union of the Left. This position supports a Union involving the Left Radicals - an explicit bourgeois party. It is a centrist position, tailing the Union of the Left similar to the position that rendered the PSR (official section of the USFI in Chile) impotent in the pre-revolutionary situation that opened up in 1970 with the victory of the Chilean Union of the Left (the Popular Unity). It denies the fundamental Marxist principle of the need for independence of the working class from all bourgeois forces. It testifies to the degeneration of the Fourth International into a centrist federation and the need to prepare a new international.

What then would be the attitude of revolutionaries to the Union of the Left?

Revolutionaries should direct their agitation to the rank and file of the CP and SP to force their leaders to break with the bourgeoisie. This would involve a fight to win the CP and SP rank and file to force their leaders to lead an extra-parliamentary struggle, centred on direct industrial action by the working class, to realise all the best elements in the Common Programme and using the parliamentary platform as a tactic subsidiary to this struggle. The basic orientation here would be the fight for a united front, committed to struggle to force now the nationalisations, jobs and minimum wages parts of the programme into existence. In this context revolutionaries would say to the rank and file of the CP and SP:

"We do not believe that the CP and SP leadership and their confederers in the Leadership of the unions want to lead a mass, direct battle to wrest the basic nationalisation, minimum wages and employment demands of the Programme. We know, however, that you have faith in their ability to do this. Let us therefore jointly put the issue to the test in united front struggle for the demands. Together we can build a real movement of struggle,

a United Front, which if your trust is well placed, can force your leaders to lead a struggle of direct mass action for these aims. If it cannot do this however, as we revolutionaries believe, then this united front movement we can build in joint struggle will be the basis for the working class to go forward anyway and find new leaders in a fight for a real workers' government as a step towards workers power."

In the course of this united front struggle, reserving always full freedom of criticism, revolutionaries would of course fight unceasingly to deepen the nationalisation demands etc. by fighting against the class betrayal involved in compensation and for workers control of nationalised plants. The vacillation and opposition of the Union of the Left leaders would be repeatedly pointed out in this struggle as well as their fellow traitors in the trade union bureaucracy.

It is in this context that the general aim of getting the CP/SP leaders to break with the bourgeoisie must be posed. In mounting such a political battle and bringing it into the Parliamentary arena in the Assembly elections, revolutionaries would repeatedly point out to the CP and SP rank and file the disruptions of the Left Radicals. The Left Radicals are the weakest target for revolutionary critique of the Union of the Left. Concrete examples are a dime a dozen. They were first to disrupt by calling for re-negotiation of the Common Programme in the run-up to the Assembly elections; they refused to stand down or vote for the best placed candidates when these were CP in many constituencies; they sought and got pacts with the SP against, and as a result were left unopposed in thirty-four constituencies by the CP. The CP leadership used this as a pretext for calling for a re-negotiation of the Programme and in refusing to stand down before the best placed candidate in the second round. True, the SP and CP are ultimately responsible for having them in the Union. But Marxist strategy and tactics is in no way moralistic. The Left Radicals are clearly the line of least resistance tactically and must be related to as such.

Agitation around these issues, focussed on the demands -

LEFT RADICALS OUT OF THE LEFT UNION

FOR THE CP AND SP TO CONTEST ALL SEATS

ALL-IN BEHIND THE BEST PLACED CANDIDATE IN THE SECOND ROUND

FOR THE CP AND SP TOGETHER TO TAKE THE GOVERNMENT

MOBILISE THE CLASS FOR ITS NEEDS

would surely be bound to get the ear of the rank and file of the CP and SP.

In this strategy revolutionaries would not be protecting or supporting in any way the Union of the Left or a Union of Left Government. On the contrary, they would be attacking the Union of the Left, which is reformist and therefore counter-revolutionary in leadership, not head-on but from the side, from its right side, the Left Radicals.

Rather than protecting or supporting in any way the Union of the Left or a Union of Left Government without the Left Radicals, we would be fighting to break up the illusions of the CP and SP rank and file in it by raising in struggle the policies that the working class needs now, starting with their felt desire to realise the nationalisations, jobs and minimum wage demands etc. in the Common Programme. We would call on the reformists, left and right, in the leadership of the Union of the Left and their confreres in the trade unions to support these demands by supporting the struggle to attain them in action.

This means of course that we, unlike the LWR and the International of which it is part, the OCRFI, do not hold that the CP/SP, broken with the Left Radicals, would be a Workers Government if it won. The fight to drive the Radicals out of the Union of the Left or a Union of Left Government would smash up one of the basic weapons of the CP/SP leadership, which they use to drive back the movement of the masses towards united front action. It would also be a major step in forcing the CP and SP to be more accountable to their rank and file. Despite this, which LWR's simple call for the CP/SP to take the Government power, and its uncritical attitude to such a Government, would in practice disarm the vanguard of the working class in the face of the inevitable treachery of the reformist leadership of the CP/SP.

"The fight for a Workers and Peasants Government is the fight for the break of the workers parties with the bourgeoisie, for a Government without bourgeois Ministers. And in this fight, Trotskyists pose no programmatic conditions since the political situation is concentrated in the fight against Giscard/Barre Government, for the dissolution of the Assembly, against which the Union of the Left sets itself. Thus to pose programmatic conditions is to turn one's back on the concrete form of the break with the bourgeoisie and to act as a left cover for the Popular Front". Workers Republic No 67 p.20.

Firstly, the line here is identical with the line of OCRFI in France and accounts for the fact that it submerged its own programme so much as to wrongly reject putting up its own candidates in the first round. Secondly, the line here makes a fetish out of the organisational break with the bourgeoisie - a CP/SP Government without bourgeois representatives. This metaphysically isolates the task of breaking the CP/SP leadership with the bourgeoisie from the task of forcing them to break with the bourgeoisie politically!

The latter can only be done by the CP and SP rank and file committing them to lead direct mass action. The LWR's absurd posing of the demand for the DISSOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, a demand that at the moment would cut right across the whole mobilising dynamic of the struggle to force the CP/SP to take the power in the Assembly and lead a struggle centred outside parliament for the maximum implementation of the Common Programme, flows from their passive propagandist

conception of the development of workers' consciousness. Presumably when the CP/SP rank and file see, as in the OCRFI's propaganda, that the CP/SP leadership are unwilling to back the demand for the dissolution of the National Assembly, the scales will fall from their eyes- dissolved by the magic pedagogy of the OCRFI. The CP/SP rank and file will then pour into the OCI-French section of the OCFRI - and then we will have before us the Revolutionary Party. This is idealist rationalism not Marxist realism. It flows from the mechanical application of the democratic demands for Colonial countries of Trotskys' 38 Transitional Programme to an incomplete and defective bourgeois democratic system which of course has elements of Bonapartism. Note, too, that in the imagined dissolution of the National Assembly (which LWRs mechanical method sees as a mere Bonapartist apparatus) their hold-all demand for a Constituent Assembly would come into its own. Nothing could be further from the transitional method necessary in the present political reality of France, a method that starts with the deeply felt needs of the labouring masses and leads them on in struggle, step by step, to a revolutionary confrontation with the capitalist system.

As opposed to the passive centrism of LWR and the OCRFI perspective, revolutionaries would link the demand for the SP and CP to take Government power to a struggle for a United Front of CP, SP, far left and non-party workers, centred on direct action and built up through local Councils of Action linked nationally. The standing of candidates in the first round would be to avail of chances to promote this perspective. The fight to drive the bourgeois Radicals out of the Union of the Left would have to be continued in a struggle, based on the organs of the United Front, to drive out and replace every CP and SP Minister or Deputy who dragged his feet or attempted to disrupt the upsurge of the masses to win all the genuine demands of the Common Programme. It is only in such a perspective that the possibility arises of taking the workers beyond the limits of the Common Programme through their own experiences in a struggle of trying to enforce workers control, oppose compensation and physically defend their gains. It is in this perspective of struggle too that the possibility arises of a real Workers and Peasants Government. Only this perspective can guarantee that the fight for the formally correct demand "FOR THE CP AND SP TO FORM THE GOVERNMENT" will not hand over the vanguard of the French workers, disarmed into the hands of counter revolutionary traitors such as Marchais and Mitterand and their ilk. The LWR's position is a recipe for disarming the vanguard in face of the inevitable treachery of the SP and CP leadership.

The USFI's position is even worse. It explicitly supports, critically of course, an election Bloc that includes an explicit bourgeois party - the Left Radicals - much as the Portugese section of the USFI supported the "REVOLUTIONARY UNITED FRONT"

which accepted the programme of the MFA - the army of the bourgeois state in Portugal in 1975. Although formally the LWR does not break the principle of complete and total independence from all bourgeois institutions as solutions to working class problems in this instance, its mere calling for the CP and SP to break organisationally with the bourgeoisie reduces to the same position when the chips are down.

THE PERSPECTIVE NOW IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE DEFEAT IN THE ELECTIONS.

The fact that the Union of the Left got almost 50% of the vote in the election, despite the deliberate disruption by its leaders who were terrified of victory, shows the enormous pressure from workers for a change to a pro-worker government. This poses the question of the basic orientation revolutionaries should fight for now. Without going into details, the fight for the SP and CP to form the Government without the Radicals and committed by their rank and file to lead direct action to win the jobs, minimum wage and nationalisation demands of the Common Programme, must still be the focus. This goes of course with the fight to copper-fasten the exit of the Left Radicals out of the Union of the Left and the right of any working-class party to join it and to argue their own perspectives. Revolutionaries directing their programme of action at the vanguard must attempt to translate into mass action the rumblings already being heard from the unions about the need to fight for the minimum wage now regardless of the election defeat and for the big lump sums held back in anticipation of a left victory. This does not mean that the political struggle should not also pursue the CP/SP leadership into its Parliamentary hideout. New Assembly elections might not take place again for years. The less important Presidential election is not till 1981. In this time span the Giscard, Barres, and Chiracs, using a combination of stick and carrot, can succeed in driving down the expectations of the French workers and peasants to such a degree that the issue of a workers government and the opening up of a battle for workers power reverts again to the realm of general propaganda. This would be a serious setback for the European and world working class.

There is only one effective method of speeding up new elections. This is by making the present Assembly impossible by vehement opposition to it in workplace and street. This must merge into sharp parliamentary obstruction, to which the SP/CP ministers and deputies must be committed by their rank and file.

This must now be the new focus for the United Front fight and for its extension into the arena of Government in a struggle for the SP/CP to take Government power in a new election made possible by the ungovernability of France under Giscard and Co. Marchais, Mitterand etc must in this context be branded, not merely because they oppose the extra-parliamentary struggle for the things workers and peasants need now but also because their

activity as the opposition in the National Assembly does not at all serve to prepare and bring new elections. A revolutionary party no matter how small, would, in the aftermath of the defeat of the Union of the Left, swivel in this direction.

When we say no such Party exists in France, notwithstanding the pretensions of the LCR (French USFI), the OCI (French OCRFI) Lutte Ouvriere etc, we do not say it out of self-righteous satisfaction but with a view to defining the key task of the period which we nail on the masthead of our tendency, THE PREPARATION NOW OF A NEW REVOLUTIONARY INTERNATIONAL OF WORKERS PARTIES, BASED ON A NEW REVOLUTIONARY INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME ADDRESSED TO ALL BASIC ISSUES OF THE PRESENT PERIOD OF WORLD CAPITALIST CRISIS.

We invite our comrades in the SLP to join us in the forging of this indispensable political instrument. The whole future of humanity depends on the successful performance of this enormous task.

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In the article on Coalisland, W.R. devotes a lot of its analysis to MSR/PD & SWM centrists' preparedness to join all kinds of fronts with the Irish Independence Party and the SDLP. LWR did not point out, however, that these centrists were not fighting for genuine United Front structures but for an unholy popular alliance where criticisms of those anti-working class forces would be regarded as "sectarian". (Of course, MSR/PD and SWM wax eloquently about the "sins" of the SDLP and IIP etc. but never before the masses - their fear, like SWR's, being "isolation".) LWR's purely formal and scholastic treatment of the United Front shows nevertheless correctly that any such attempt to build alliances with these forces on the basis of the Coalisland initiative is unprincipled. But it ignores the whole question which really concretely faced the left at Coalisland, namely what kind of relationship do revolutionary marxists have with the petit-bourgeois republicans?

For, it is obvious that at this moment it is not the SDLP or IIP that actively threatens the independence of the working class but the republican movement whose political aims are entirely nationalist - for bourgeois independence and unity. Where do LWR fight for the independence and autonomy of the workers' movement in alliances with Provisionals and the RAC while they quote Lenin on the Anti-Imperialist United Front and the theses of the 1923 Congress of the Comintern? Will they fight for the right to argue their programmes or TUCAR's programme before the republican masses in Belfast, and for the right to criticise the tactics, strategy and politics of the Provos - for that is what the United Front demands of us as revolutionaries.

The masses have got to be won away from that movement's politics and strategy and LWR and TUCAR on present showing hve no intention of fighting for that.

SOCIALIST WORKER REVIEW— RE-EXAMINING WHOSE ASSUMPTIONS?

A sound principle for every socialist wanting to judge the worth of those individuals or groups putting forward their solutions for the working class struggle for socialism is to measure their actions against their words. Do their deeds even begin to match their fine phrases?

The "Socialist Worker Review", journal of the SWM tendency in the Socialist Labour Party (Socialist Workers Tendency), contains a fair number of fine statements about its aims and intentions for building a revolutionary tendency in the S.L.P.

"The purpose of this magazine is to stimulate the debate on revolutionary ideas inside the SLP and indeed in the working class movement generally".

- page 2 SWR 1.

"The process of building the party must include an element of differing ideas existing side by side, but also an element of all members being forced to re-examine the assumptions they have been making for a long time"

- page 7. SWR 1, our emphasis.

"Readers are invited to contribute to the development of a revolutionary tendency in the SLP" and "Those who are in general sympathy with the magazine are invited to a conference.. to work out in detail the policies of the Tendency" page 3 SWR 1, our emphasis.

Let's see how seriously the SWR takes its own words.

(1) The I.W.G. tendency wrote immediately an open letter to the SWR, stating our basic agreement with them on the need to form a revolutionary workers tendency and on the perspective and need for debate and discussion involving re-examination of past assumptions. As members of another revolutionary tendency we asked for the right to address the conference to state our agreement and differences with the SWR as part of that process. SWR refused us the right to attend their conference. They say that they have nothing to debate with us. It is clear that for the SWR "stimulating debate" or "re-examining our assumptions" is only to take place as long as it is the assumptions of others in the SLP, others' failures, others' politics which will be the subject matter. No one is permitted the right to seriously scrutinize SWM's failures, politics and assumptions. In fact in the small print of their magazine, one finds despite all talk of assumptions (and in contradiction of their pretence on April 20 that the SWT had not already been formed)

"To co-ordinate the activities within the SLP of those who feel an affinity with the politics that SWM defended in the past, the Socialist Workers Tendency has been formed".

- page 20, SWR 1, February, our emphasis

If this is the "democracy" these marxists demonstrate to the SLP members, those members may well ask where is it any different from the unprincipled and bureaucratic denial of open debate typical of the Labour Party and Trade Union leaders and so correctly attacked by the SWR.

(2) SWR denied their eventual conference the right to discuss whether IWG should be allowed to participate. This was done by dictat from the chair and by rejecting procedural motions to the contrary which were put by some of those attracted to the meeting by the open and broad character it was supposed to have according to the advertisements. IWG respected the vote of the predominantly SWM attendance which ratified the sectarian attitude of the "Editorial Board". It is significant that many of the independents attending either abstained in the absence of discussion or voted in defence of IWG. Our leaving the meeting, however, should in no way be taken to mean that a show of hands can decide a matter of principle or limit the democratic right of all in the SLP to attend tendency meetings advertised as open. The pretence that the meeting was private and that it was a "mistake to have advertised it as broad" (Cde O'Brien) cannot conceal the manoeuvre of the SWT. Cde O'Brien's claim that the tendency did not previously exist and was only being set up on April 20 on the basis of those who attended contradicts what they wrote in the February issue, contradicts the existence of the Editorial Board, is belied by the imposition of a pre-selected chair and procedure on the meeting despite motions from the floor, and must surely be seen as ludicrous by anyone who has witnessed the tendency in action in the Trade Union Group and the Young Socialists. The Editorial Board was prepared to undermine the democratic spirit of Party Life in order to shield their captive attendance from any hint of criticism of their record. Worse, they debase the meaning of a "broad tendency" and deny the need for revolutionary unity on a limited programme within the SLP.

(3) SWR's undemocratic and uncomradely attitude might have worn with party members if the SWR could have pointed to seven years of successful growth and development of the SWM's brand of revolutionary socialism. But as J. Goodwillie states in his review of SWM history, the organisation remained static in size with a high turnover of membership - hardly proof that they have found the answer. So, surely the comrades of the SLP have the right and duty to ask the SWR to re-examine their own assumptions in the process of examining and passing judgement on others.

But if SWR is anything to go by, there is little evidence of SWT comrades doing anything like that. For example, Cde. Goodwillie explains "the failure of SWM to grow in this way: "the small size of SWM was a continuing difficulty and bloc to recruitment". Hardly a credible, logical or even sensible reason! Perhaps it might have had something to do with SWM's politics? Nowhere does Cde. Goodwillie even attempt to scrutinise them.

(4) When we look at those politics as expressed in the Review it is clear immediately why the group was not a success. (We hope soon to produce a lengthier treatment of their political degeneracy as one example of the Centrism of the far-left groups.)

a) In the article on Bloody Sunday it is stated that the attempt to rebuild the mass movement on the streets against repression needs to look for "working class leadership" as an alternative to the Relatives Action Committees. Nowhere does it spell out concretely either how or on what programme and perspective such a movement could be built. Instead we are told: "From a working class point of view what is needed is a revolutionary movement which would reflect the presence of imperialism in all its forms" and "we must begin using working class methods, bring the political arguments into the class and look for ways to take up the fight against repression and the fight against capitalism simultaneously".

Here we have lots of fine pious statements, no concrete proposals. When it comes to real concrete proposals on doing exactly what the SWR piously spouts about "working class leadership", the SWT comrades take a different position. In TUCAR they have consistently opposed IWG motions putting forward a trade-union perspective of action to build a united front against repression. At the last TUCAR conference on February, 19th they voted against an IWG proposal in favour of one which saw the way forward as working alongside the R.A.C.s in the North. So much for their criticisms of the R.A.C.'s! Their Belfast membership is actually in the R.A.C. there!

b) At Coalisland the SWM present and speaking as SWM, made no criticism of the "broad front" platform which uncritically allowed the Provisional republicans and their supporters to dominate politically the conference and its follow-up formations. In the SWR report of the Coalisland meeting the SWR says "the conference took an exciting and important step towards development of a new stage of resistance to the presence of British Imperialism in Ireland" and later: "Yet it is also true that the proposals put forward at the conference show that little has been learnt". So which is it? . Hardly a report to inspire confidence in an organisations consistency.

concluded on page 44

- INFANTILE DISORDER.

At different periods in the history of the international class struggle Marxists have had to defend their programmes, strategies, and methods, not only against those who for some short term gain were willing to dilute every socialist principle but also those who claimed to be the real defenders of Marxism against all who 'compromised'. The classic analysis of these ultra-left Marxists is Lenin's "Left-Wing" Communism, an infantile disorder" in which he shows that under the windy rhetoric of "no compromise" of the super-hard revolutionism there is an opportunism and a betrayal of principle equal to the worst reformism.

The Revolutionary Struggle group, a tiny sect, represent just such an example of this kind of infantile disorder. Their latest pamphlet, "Ireland, the class war and our tasks" has the single merit of being the most revealing expression of this groups' political confusion and ignorance about revolutionary Marxism, its principles and traditions, and how to apply them in struggle. Their other publications, in the "Ripening of Time" journal merely exhibit a concoction of half-digested academic Marxist sociology and the worst form of uncritical hero-worship of Maoism in third world countries.

Their latest pamphlet does not claim to be a programme, strategy, or a manifesto. What then is it? It is supposed to be the basis for a "strategy" which is "simply a set of guidelines to help organise struggle and make it more effective in its confrontation with the employers and the State. A strategy comes out from the lessons of victories and defeats". Here the RS group place themselves firmly among those who have no perspective and reject the whole programmatic method of Marxism - what a revolutionary strategy is in the Marxist tradition or how it is created.

Thus in the chapter entitled 'the world situation' no attempt is made to characterise the basic features of the present period of world crisis and how such objective conditions dictate the need for the re-elaboration of the transitional programme which alone can guide the international working class struggle and prepare the class subjectively for the seizure of power.

That their 'internationalism' is nothing but another glittering trinket is borne out in chapter after chapter with their complete capitulation to Provisional Republicanism, and its strategy and tactics.

Their 'opposition' to capitalism, imperialism, and to reformism within the labour movement, is sheer moralism. For when it comes to the practical task of overcoming the difficulties posed by reactionary trade union bureaucracies, instead of fighting for their ideas to be taken up within the unions, they

abstain from unions, failing to see the contradictions within the latter, and literally leech off "anti-trade union feeling" in recruiting drop-outs. Thus, they leave the rest of the workers completely at the mercy of the reformist bureaucrats. Such "frightfully revolutionary disquisitions" Lenin regarded as "ridiculous and childish nonsense":

This ridiculous "theory" that Communists should not work in reactionary trade unions reveals with the utmost clarity the frivolous attitude of the "left" Communists towards the question of influencing the "masses" and their misuse of clamour about the "masses" (Lenin op.cit., p.36)

RS, ignorant of the traditions of revolutionary socialism as founded by Marx and Engels and elaborated and codified by Lenin and Trotsky in the Third and Fourth Internationals, are bound to repeat all the errors of the invariably more sophisticated ultra-leftists of the past. Without any firm grounding in the Marxist methods they not only cannot correct their errors but fail even to recognise them as such.

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It is this overall vagueness, pious rhetoric and inconsistency that is characteristic of the SWR's politics as it has been of SWM's. It is the product, we believe, of a completely incorrect method and understanding of revolutionary marxism, its principles, method and traditions with regard to the importance of programme and strategy for any attempt to build a revolutionary party in Ireland or elsewhere. The SWR has a duty to face up to its past record and our criticism. Only through fraternal debate before the SLP membership can we both demonstrate the seriousness of the issues that divide us and prepare the development of a revolutionary cadre.

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MSR / PD:

TWO CONFUSIONS MAKING ONE.

The fusion of the Movement for a Socialist Republic (formerly RMG and still Irish Section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International) and Peoples Democracy (Belfast), announced in the February edition of Socialist Republic (their joint paper until full agreement has been reached) was celebrated by a conference in which Tariq Ali of the IMG and Bernadette Mc Aliskey of the Independent Socialist Party welcomed the union as a step forward for the class struggle in Ireland. As Mc Aliskey's group has not joined the fusion, it would seem that her ISP has some differences with the politics of MSR/PD. What then, we ask the ISP, were they doing welcoming something they themselves don't agree with? Or is it that the ISP believe that "Unity" in itself is a good thing for its own sake, no matter how unprincipled or opportunist?

This point of view is readily understandable when the fusion is analysed seriously, for, from the fusion statement it is clear that what has brought these two together amounts to no more than acceptance of a number of pious platitudes about imperialism, the national question, the two-nation theory, loyalism, women and internationalism. On the national question the statement is deliberately left vague because the two groups have not yet agreed about the Permanent Revolution. On the list of platitudes there is nothing to keep any serious revolutionary group out of the fusion, so the question that should be answered by the new organisation is: on what political programme and strategy for the struggle for workers' power in Ireland has the fusion of these organisations occurred? Secondly, in what way does this programme and strategy define the MSR/PD as distinct from other revolutionary groups - politically, organisationally, in its methods of fighting for its programme etc., and as superior to them on the basis of experience and lessons learnt from the past ten years of struggle both in Ireland and internationally?

Alas, we are given no indication on any of these questions. Instead, these two sects, neither of which in ten years and seven years of political life respectively have made the slightest permanent impact on or built any serious roots in any section of the working class in Ireland, provide us with self-applauding biographies about their "contribution" to "organising" the struggles, giving "heroic boosts" to the masses, helping to build "mass resistance" and encouraging "internationalism" and "unity" among left-wing organisations. What they must explain, if they claim to be serious revolutionary socialists, is why their serious and well-intended

efforts came to nought. Why, in the PD's case particularly, did their organisation shrink to a sect concentrated wholly on one town from being at one time a large radical ultra-left ginger group trailing opportunistically first NICA and then the Provos? The duty of revolutionary socialists is nothing else but, on the basis of their programme and strategy for workers power and socialism, to fight for leadership of the working class in all struggles to achieve that goal. PD/MSR have contributed nothing to the creation of any kind of revolutionary programme and strategy which could do that.

In fact both groups' impotence is the result of their lack of any coherent conception of what revolutionary politics in theory, method and practice really is. In their political life they have consistently tailed bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalists, trade union bureaucrats and feminists, veering occasionally to the most strident ultra-leftism to conceal their chronic opportunism at every point. MSR, then RMG, at one point called for the "democratisation of the Catholic Church" (sic) in support of Father Faul in Belfast. Both groups display a chronic instability in their politics and methods, compensated for by clouds of windy exaggerations and melodramatic phantasies about calling the "masses" to revolutionary action. PD have never grounded their theory or practice in the politics, methods or traditions of the Bolsheviks, Lenin, or Trotsky. The MSR remain an anaemic version of a fetish, the so-called Fourth International, a pretentious myth having meaningful existence neither politically or organisationally.

This "unit" is a bogus answer. It will solve nothing for the Irish Left. To create the basis for a new organisation first demands a mercilessly honest and scrupulous examination of programmes and strategy, the lessons of the past and their failures. Those who cannot accept the responsibility to face up to this task and prefer to create mere illusions for themselves and for others are an obstacle in the fight to build that organisation.

IWG-WHAT WE STAND FOR.

1 FOR AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PROGRAMME AND A NEW INTERNATIONAL!

The revolutionary left consists of fragmented and disunited groups stemming from the only consistently revolutionary tradition to emerge from the collapse of revolutionary communism in the 1920s and '30s, namely the tradition of Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International movement. Opportunism, dogmatism and sectarianism have wreaked havoc within this movement. Nevertheless, it is only on the basis of the fundamental elements of this doctrine and method, applied creatively to the new period of capitalist crisis opening before us, that there can be built revolutionary parties and a new International.

The Irish Workers Group holds that the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International was the highest programmatic achievement of the continuous battles waged by Trotsky in the International Left Opposition and the International Communist League against Stalinism, Centrism and Reformism in the world working-class movement, and against Fascism. It therefore represented an international programmatic alternative to the reformist Second International and the Stalinised Third (Communist) International. The purpose of the Transitional Programme was to become an instrument in the hands of revolutionary workers and communist intellectuals in order to bring the working class onto a war footing internationally.

It was a programme which, while starting from the immediate needs of the working class to defend itself, sought to carry the struggle inexorably to the goal of workers' power. Trotsky creatively applied and developed the major tactical and strategic principles of Lenin and of the first four Congresses of the Communist International. He did this in the context of the Stalinist counter-revolution, imminent fascist takeOver, deepening economic and political crisis pointing towards a new World War.

Thus the Transitional Programme of 1938 is nothing else but a re-elaboration of the transitional method first clearly outlined by Lenin in April 1917 and further embodied in the programmatic theses of the 1919-22 Congresses of the Comintern. The transitional method is the most advanced development of the Communist programme and strategy in the epoch of Imperialism. It is the only means whereby the historic political principles of the First International (1864) the Second International (1899), the Paris Commune (1871) and the Communist International (1919) could be concretely and creatively applied in a new epoch to pose the way forward from the immediate struggle of the working class to the overthrow of capitalism itself.

We reject completely the fetishisation of the 1938 Transitional Programme in one form or another by the representatives of the "United Secretariat of the F.I." (USFI) or the "Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the F.I." (OCRFI). Both these international currents have proved themselves ideologically and organisationally bankrupt. However, in rejecting the fossilising of the 1938 Programme we in no way identify with those who, in rejecting it, also repudiate the basic traditions, principles and method represented by that programme. These groups, particularly the British "Socialist Workers Party" and its fraternal tendency in the Socialist Labour Party in Ireland, the Socialist Workers Tendency, are equally bankrupt.

We believe that fidelity to the 1938 Programme and its method, to the traditions of the Comintern in its first four Congresses, is fidelity to revolutionary scientific Marxism in its historically most developed form in the epoch of monopoly capitalism. In the new period of capitalist crisis this fidelity demands the re-elaboration of a new Transitional Programme and a new International around it.

2 CAPITALISM HAS SURVIVED BY THE BETRAYAL & DEFEAT OF THE WORKING CLASS.

The maturing of capitalism into a world system marked its final epoch, the epoch of Imperialism. Imperialism strives for domination instead of for liberty. Its wars destroy the forces of production on a monstrous scale in trying to solve its crises of profitability. It props up barbarous ne-colonial regimes to maintain its interests abroad. It condemns two-thirds of humanity to systematic underdevelopment of their countries, crushing the development of their productive forces and making them sources of super-profits and raw materials for the "advanced" countries.

The exploitation and oppression practised by capitalism and imperialism call forth forces of resistance both from the working class and the oppressed masses and nationalities. The major struggles of the working class tend not merely to encroach on the rights of capital but ultimately to expropriate the capitalists. The working class can only liberate itself and all the oppressed from capitalism by wresting the means of social production internationally from capitalist control. It will replace production for profit with production for human need. Because there is no other class it can aspire to exploit, the working class by establishing its own rule will put an end forever to class society.

The activity of the working class in many countries and over many decades bears witness to its revolutionary character. The highest of its achievements was the creation of the first Workers State in 1917. To-day, however, the countries known as "communist" are neither communist nor socialist because the working class does not hold state power in them. Socialism can only be constructed by Workers States based on the democratic power of workers councils. It can only surpass the productive power of capitalism by creating an international planned economy.

In the age of Imperialism capitalism's survival has principally been the result of two forces - the reformist and Stalinist leaderships in the international labour movement and the growth of U.S. imperialism.

After World War I, capitalism, challenged by the first Workers' state and a mass revolutionary wave, was saved in its hearlands by the reformist parties of the Second International. The incorporation into the state of the reformist workers' parties and Trade Union Bureaucracy has remained a vital component of capitalist stability.

In the 1920s and 30s the eventual victory of fascism and the destruction of the Chinese Revolution and Communist Party were directly tied to the Stalinising of the Comintern and its counter-revolutionary perspective of "socialism in one country".

After World War II capitalism could not have survived and consolidated without the conscious support of the Stalinised "Communist" Parties. Notably in France, Italy and Greece the Stalinist parties disarmed the potentially revolutionary forces, giving power back to the bourgeoisie. In East Europe independent working class, peasant and nationalist movements were subordinated to the interests of the Russian bureaucracy in stability and shared spheres of interest by the creation of client states to the Russian bureaucracy.

Born of the Russian Revolution, nurtured on the destruction of what remained of workers' power in Russia and the elimination of revolutionary vitality in the Comintern, the Stalinist Parties crossed to the camp of the bourgeoisie. In Russia and East Europe they have created states that must be destroyed by workers' revolutions. In the West they offer only collaborationist, nationalist reformist programmes. Stalinism and Stalinist Parties, Soviet, Chinese and Eurocommunist, are reactionary and an obstacle on a world scale to the socialist revolution.

In addition to the conscious counter-revolutionary role of the Stalinist and Reformist workers' parties, capitalism has only survived as the result of the wholesale destruction of capital in two imperialist world wars and the subordination of the world economy to American imperialism and its massive expansion after the Second World War. The exceptional stability and expansion of world capitalism after the Second World War has to be understood primarily as a result of these two factors. However, capitalism in this epoch cannot free itself from the pressures of inflation, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, increasing instability and a sharpening of competition on a world scale, except at the expense of the working class.

The relative backwardness of British capitalism in the post-war period has magnified for that country the effects of the emerging world crisis. The attempted liberalisation in the '60s of its imperialist policy in Ireland was necessitated by the urgency of rationalising its policy of exploitation of Ireland and of extracting itself from costly colonial commitments. The relative growth of the Irish economy even appeared to make the new strategy possible for a time, but it ran up against a series of social, political and economic contradictions intrinsic to the Partitioning of Ireland upon which British imperialism has based its policy in Ireland for 50 years.

3 BRING THE WORKING CLASS TO THE HEAD OF THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE; - FOR WORKERS POWER!

The most significant defeat for the Irish working class was Partition the form in which imperialist domination was consolidated in 1921. The Unionist bourgeoisie and its allies retained the industrial base of the North-East within the new Ulster state; the Southern bourgeoisie eventually settled under the name of the Irish Republic for most of rural Ireland and the few manufacturing centres outside the North-East.

In conditions where the nationalist workers of the North still posed a threat to the social and political stability of the Northern regime the Stormont Government armed itself with an arsenal of repressive legislation, as well as a permanent paramilitary police force - the B Specials. Furthermore, in order to prevent any possibility of

Catholic and Protestant workers ever uniting against low wages, unemployment, bad housing etc., it institutionalised wholesale sectarian discrimination against Catholics in every aspect of social life - jobs, houses, education. Equally, the Southern capitalist state, deeply backward economically and socially, due to the impact of imperialism, rested firmly on coercive legislation to maintain internal social order in a period of world economic slump which demanded massive unemployment and wage-cutting if capitalist profits were to be maintained. As an aid to further weakening internally the working class, clerical control over all areas of social and personal life pervaded both the Northern and Southern states.

The historic political weaknesses of the Irish working class were intensified enormously by Partition. Following the death of Connolly the role of defending the working class fell to the traditional leaders of the Irish labour movement none of whom had either conception of nor interest in an independent working class struggle for national freedom. As the War of Independence began under the leadership of the Labour Party increasingly sought to repudiate Connolly's and the Irish Citizen Army's example. Ultimately, such policies led step by step to the final treachery of accepting Partition and the role of Irish Labour as loyal henchmen of the first Free State Government. As a consequence the grip of both nationalism and Loyalism over the working class as a whole was strengthened. It thus widened the gap between trade union economic struggles for wages etc. and the political struggle for national independence and freedom. The deformed and stunted Irish Labour Party testifies to the effects of Partition on the development of the Irish working class who still electorally support the bourgeois populist nationalism of Fianna Fail.

With the development and expansion of world capitalism in the post-war era through the increased role of finance capital in the process of self-accumulation, both Irish states have fallen more tightly under the grip of the long-term interests of British and World Imperialism. This has necessitated both an attempt at moderation of the worst aspects of the Northern state and simultaneously the end of the "independent" protectionist policies of the Southern regime. The attempt to "reform" the Northern state, however, brought to a head all the contradictions that Partition had created. The Northern state was irreformable. Just as it had been established as one unit, it could only be abolished as such if the nationalist workers were to escape from the rule of Orange bigotry. It was their magnificent attempt to do this that has brought the real state forces of British imperialism against their uprising and their defenders, the IRA. At the same time, it revealed just as sharply the other contradictions of Partition - the real nature of the Southern capitalist regime as the long-standing and brutal accomplice of British imperialism. Its role has been not only to wipe out the IRA in the South but also to make sure that the Irish working class there play no part in the resistance of nationalist workers in the North. For them to do so would open up the path to a working class solution to the national struggle, the overthrow of capitalism and imperialism and the setting up of a Workers Republic.

Therefore, the unresolved national question remains the most vital struggle around which to unite the majority of Irish workers in the fight for their own state power. Imperialism, whatever its form, dominates the interests of the Irish working class on a 32-County basis. It is the common enemy of all workers. In order to defeat it and the capitalist systems which strengthen its grip, a revolutionary marxist international programme must spell out sharply and clearly a strategy whose tactics, slogans, demands and popular

organisation, if taken up by workers, must (a) link concretely the economic battles of Southern workers with the imperialised nature of the southern economy and its state as well as its role in directly aiding British imperialism in the North; (b) link concretely and step by step the anti-imperialist struggle of nationalist workers against the Northern state and the British Army to the capitalist policies of mass unemployment, low wages, high prices etc. carried out by the bosses and their state machine.

The organised Republican Movement is historically the most militant expression of Irish nationalism. However, the Provisionals, despite all their political camouflage about socialism, the workers, and opposition to capitalism, stand for the strictly revolutionary nationalist demand for independence and unity. Thus their 'strategy' is the purely physical-force struggle to drive the British Army out of "occupied" Ireland. Their strategy offers no answers to the presence of British imperialist and capitalist interests on a large scale in the South where no British army exists. Neither does it confront the collaboration of the Southern state despite the massive blows dealt to them in the South.

In essence, the Provisionals ignore both the class nature of the states North and South and the need to base all struggles on the only class-capable of overthrowing capitalism and imperialism - the working class. It is for this reason that the Provisionals' campaign taken as a whole has remained divorced from the organised working class. This is most clearly seen in the persistence of their bombing campaign which has failed in its stated objective of driving out the British presence. The only effect of the bombing since the fall of Stormont has been to alienate, confuse and demoralise the anti-unionists in the North and the majority of workers in the South. It has merely provided an excuse for poisonous propaganda by press and state in Britain and Ireland against the anti-imperialist struggle.

While in no way supporting the call for a ceasefire, we call for an end to the bombing campaign and for the building of a mass political movement, against imperialism and the Northern state, based upon the organised working class North and South.

Only on this basis can we

- 1) build the armed front of workers, socialists and republicans against imperialism,
- 2) build revolutionary workers' councils,
- 3) prepare the mobilisation of the masses for a General Strike,
- 4) fight for an all-Ireland Government of workers' parties to defend every gain by the masses in struggle,
- 5) smash both states and replace them with the class rule of the Workers Republic, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The struggle to build a mass political movement against British imperialism and its allies in the Irish ruling class must begin by building resistance to all forms of repression, torture of prisoners, and for defence of anti-imperialists and their political status in prison. Only on this basis can the co-ordinated mass organisation be built which will be capable of forcing the British Army to withdraw unconditionally.

The struggle against army terror, torture by police and repression North and South can never be separated from the goal of overthrowing imperialism and the capitalist states in Ireland. Only a working-class based movement under the leadership of revolutionary socialists and their programme is capable of effectively carrying through the immediate struggles and extending them into an offensive. It is

urgent therefore to mobilise organised workers with their unique industrial strength in a fight to oppose repression and torture. The Trade Union Campaign Against Repression must be built on this basis seeking to win workers North and South to the perspective of industrial action on the most immediate demands and for an end to all special courts, the repeal of all repressive legislation, the defence of all detained under such laws, for a working class inquiry into torture, repression and conditions of political prisoners to be conducted by the labour movement under rank and file inspection and control.

While continuing to build independent working-class organisation against repression as the basis for a mass united front against imperialism, and capitalism, we call for joint activity with other anti-imperialist groups on the basis of united front principles, namely that the campaigns be open to all who accept the agreed necessary concrete demands and that at all times we retain the right to argue for our own programme in front of the masses especially on questions of aims, tactics and strategy. We seek to involve trade union based groups in such action and to make their economic power in strikes, sit-ins etc. the key weapon in winning our demands. In order to take the struggle beyond defence against repression we argue as the basis for joint action for: British Troops Out Now; Release all Political Prisoners North and South; Disband the Ulster Defence Regiment; Disarm the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

4 PUT THE LABOUR MOVEMENT ON A WAR FOOTING AGAINST THE CAPITALIST OFFENSIVE!

The reformist Labour Party, the Stalinist "Communist" Party and Official Sinn Fein (WP), and the centrist groups have nothing to offer the working class in terms of coherent political strategy. In Ireland particularly the working class needs political solutions which relate to the special intensity of the international capitalist crisis in an imperialised economy. The divisions in the Irish trade union movement are many and profound, between men and women, craft and general workers, public and private sector, Unionist and anti-Unionist, Congress and non-Congress, etc. In addition, the political backwardness of the rank and file is re-inforced by a bloated trade union bureaucracy which, in tandem with the pro-imperialist Labour Party, presides over sellouts of jobs through massive redundancies, of wages through class-collaborationist National Wage Agreements, of the unemployed through productivity dealing, rhetorical posturing on the adequacy of unemployment social welfare and overtime work agreements, and of women by reliance on the bosses' state to "enforce" equal pay and equal opportunity out of its own generosity. The statistics of unemployment, prices, wages and housing, of health and social welfare, rank with the worst in Western Europe. State revenue, drawn mostly from workers' taxes, is used on a massive scale for capital formation by the State in the hands of capitalists, mostly multinationals, who are additionally exempted from taxation and are free repatriate abroad enormous profits. Demographic features resulting from century-long economically enforced emigration and the high birth rate are magnifying the problem of future unemployment to an extent utterly insoluble for Irish capitalism. Wage restraint in the face of rising prices, short-time working on reduced wages, privatisation of and cuts in public services, "restraint" in social welfare, attacks on the right to strike and further incorporation of the unions (including workers' "participa-

tion") are all necessary resorts of the bosses and state in the coming period, North and South. Additionally, attacks on women's right to work and equal pay are likely to be stepped up along with attempts to drive them back into domestic toil.

The trade union bureaucracy is a caste of mostly paid unelected officials who function as brokers between capital and labour, disguising their trampling on rank and file democracy as "professionalism" and as being "in the interests of the union as a whole", structuring branches so as to remove decision-making as far as possible from the shop floor, using secret ballots and handed-down "recommendations" to divorce debate and the question of leadership from concrete issues of wages, jobs and conditions, invoking the full weight of fetishised rules and merely formal structures to legitimise every deception, compromise and sellout that is their stock-in-trade. Increasingly, they use their organisational power and position to crush, disenfranchise and deride rank and file activists who dare to challenge them. As such they function on behalf of the capitalist state and in collusion with it to domesticate the working class in the unions. Ideologically this caste justifies itself by appeal to a thorough-going reformist political perspective. They preach the neutrality of the state, the possibility of socialism by reform, the protection of labour by law, industrial "peace" through "good relations" and most insidiously, chauvinism and the "national interest". The separation of economic and political struggles which is intrinsic to reformism finds organisational expression in the affiliation of the major industrial unions to the Irish Labour Party (and residually the N.I.L.P.). This affiliation is in its content bourgeois and reactionary, and in its organisation thoroughly undemocratic and Partitionist. The historically stunted nature of the Irish Labour Party and the adhesion to it of only a minority of the class underlies the cliquish and exceptionally bloated nature of the combined Labour and Trade Union bureaucracy in Ireland. But it is not in the undoubted corruption of this bureaucracy that it finds its material basis, but rather in the reformist political perspective which it expresses, historically on behalf of a narrow traditional labour aristocracy rooted in craft unionism (though different from labour aristocracies in the imperialist countries based on repatriated super-profits) increasingly augmented by layers of unionised non-productive workers, and historically it also rests on divisions in the class especially the sectarian and partitionist division, imposed by imperialism, as the basis for its stunted and pro-imperialist reformism. Organisational responses to the Irish labour movement bureaucracy such as the call for an All-Ireland Labour Party are thus contentless and abstract rhetoric which ignore the need for a strategic and programmatic revolutionary alternative to reformism in the working class.

Therefore, we stand for the building of a rank and file movement in the trade unions on a programme of opposition to the capitalist offensive which is linked at all times to the revolutionary strategy for workers' power. The fight to democratise the unions is an integral part of the programme for the rank and file but is in no way a sufficient perspective for such a movement. Indeed, such a movement must create new structures which cross the divisions between unions and between the unionised and non-unionised, the employed and unemployed, and must link with tenants organisations, organised housewives and anti-imperialist groups in broad labour-movement campaigns.

We fight in the rank and file to offer a coherent, interconnected and strategic alternative to the false answers of reformists,

Stalinists, rank-and-filists, repuclicans, feminists etc. On the basis of such a strategy, organisations of struggle must be built which will not collapse when faced with the existing leaderships in the working class and anti-imperialist movement. At the very centre of such a perspective must be a governmental answer, a Workers and Small Farmers Government, to deprive the ruling class not simply of parliamentary office but also of control over the real state forces, army, police, bureaucracy, economy. Such a governmental answer does not mean taking over the existing machinery of class rule. Instead it represents the central link in a strategic and tactical chain of slogans, demands and organisational forms which have as their starting point the immediate and most pressing needs of struggles of thousands of workers and their families, and leads necessarily when taken up by workers, to the breaking up of the state machinery and replacing it with democratic organs of working class power.

It is only from this perspective that the building of a rank and file movement can be seen as the basis of a United Front of the working class against the sharpening onslaught of capitalism. Thus, the perspective of a Workers Government to stand over and defend every gain by the masses in struggle and to begin neutralising the armed power of the bourgeoisie represents the United Front at the level of Government. We therefore link the building of the rank and file movement, at all times, in our propaganda and agitation, step by step, to the call for a General Strike, the building of revolutionary workers councils, the call for a Workers' Government of all workers parties, and the smashing of both states in Ireland in order to establish the class rule of the Workers' Republic - the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

In the workers' movement and the trade unions we fight for the total independence of the unions from the state and from all legal shackles on the right to organise or strike. We fight to democratise the unions, putting them under the control of the rank and file. We fight for militant class policies, for all immediate and partial demands which increase and strengthen the morale of the working class. We fight against all attempts to make the workers, in terms of the loss of the partial gains made by generations of struggle, to pay for the crisis of capitalism and its attempts nationally and internationally to rationalise production for the sake of profit. We fight for a working-class counter-offensive, to impose workers control (not participation) on production, the only conclusion to this struggle being a planned economy and a workers state. We fight for practical solidarity with workers in struggle throughout the world, for international unity of trade unions and for links between the rank and file of different countries.

5 FOR A MASS WORKING CLASS WOMEN'S MOVEMENT!

The roots of sexual oppression have, throughout history, been linked to the existence of class society. In capitalist society in particular, it is rooted in the special role allotted to women within the nuclear family as childminders and husbandminders, that is doing the jobs of washing, cleaning, clothing, feeding, childrearing, educating, socialising etc. Instead of the cost of these social functions being provided by capitalism they are paid for out of the wages of the working class. At the present time, because domestic toil cannot be turned into a source of profit and capital

accumulation, these functions are not systematically socially organised under capitalism. Thus the domestic slavery of women, allied to their exploitation as cheap productive labour on a limited basis, is fundamental to the need of capitalism to maintain its profit rates.

The vast majority of women are active and dependent members of the exploited classes in Ireland - workers and small farmers. The oppression of working class women means for the vast majority their forced exclusion from production and from full membership of the ranks of their fellow working-class men and trade unionists. It is, in consequence, a major division and weakness in the trade union movement, aided and abetted by the sexist ideology within the leadership and membership of the male-dominated unions. In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that women workers do not show much enthusiasm for the trade union movement, underpaid as they are at work and oppressed within society and the family. The passivity of many working class women has its roots in these conditions, and upon it the ruling class and trade union leadership depend to hold back the fighting strength of the union movement as a whole.

Under the conditions of British imperialism, the oppression of women in Ireland has always taken an especially acute form. The material and ideological role of the family and of woman's place within it as the 'natural' limit of her social and personal aspirations, assumed enormous importance for Irish capitalism and British imperialism in their plans to keep the Irish working class divided within itself. In the formation of the two states in 1922, all the reactionary features of churches and religion were marshalled by the rulers North and South to keep Irish women, and especially working class women, rooted to the home. Control of education, censorship of any basic information about sexuality, denial of contraception and abortion, abolition of even the limited divorce laws in the South, combined with the most limited and meagre welfare provisions, reduced women effectively to a prisoner of the State within the family.

Therefore, a programme for women's freedom must be directly and immediately linked to fighting to bring working class women back into production as full members of their own class. That programme, therefore, cannot be separated organically from the programme and struggle of the working class as a whole for workers' power and socialism.

The struggle of working class women is one major part of the struggle to build a revolutionary socialist party based on that class. As one of its tasks such a party must lead a fight to build a mass women's movement based on the labour movement.

This organised movement of women, while not being tied organisationally to any party, if it is to grow as part of the working class struggle as a whole, must have at its head revolutionary socialists and their programme. There can be no politically "autonomous" women's movement. Attempts to build such "all-class" or "non-class" women's movements in Europe, America, Britain or Ireland have failed disastrously. We must learn the lessons of the failure of Irishwomen United and the Belfast women's groups. All failed to understand the need for theoretical clarity on the foundation of their strategy and tactics.

Therefore, we fight primarily in the labour movement and among working-class women generally for all aspects of equal economic rights with men, for full control by women of their bodies, for socialisation of childcare and domestic toil, for full personal independence and freedom. In particular we fight for the right to work, equal pay, free nursery provision, divorce, contraception and abortion on demand.

We seek to raise in all our propaganda and agitation among women the perspective of our strategy for workers' power, and to this end we fight to win the support of organised working class women for all aspects of our programme, particularly the struggle against imperialism.

6 FOR REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST REGROUPMENT - BUILD THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY!

The divisions in the revolutionary communist - Trotskyist - movement are international and reflect the failure to establish a programme and an International Party adequate to the international crisis of leadership in the world's working class.

The Irish sections of the various international tendencies are tiny sects which over the past ten years of political and economic crisis for the bourgeoisie have displayed total impotence, failing not only to grow or implant themselves in the working class but also failing to learn the obvious lessons and develop any strategy and programme capable of answering the needs of the Irish working class. The left opportunism of the economistic L.W.R. (OCRFI) in tailing the trade union and labour bureaucracy, or of S.W.M. in its cul-de-sac rank and filism and workerism, is matched by the right opportunism of the MSR (USFI) in tailing the nationalism of the Provisionals. These centrist groupings in effect operate with a minimum reformist programme covered with maximalist abstractions, denying the essential transitional method of Trotskyism.

The only programmatic basis around which a revolutionary party can be crystallised in struggle is the re-elaboration of the Transitional method of revolutionary communism as applied to this new period. This means a ruthless avoidance of opportunism, sectarianism and centrism in all its forms and the defence of marxist principles at all times. Whatever the obstacles there can be no long-term gains for any strategy which fails to link day-to-day struggles for reforms and immediate and partial demands to the perspective of workers' power and thus raise every struggle to its highest level - the level of the revolutionary party and its programme. To this programme we seek to recruit the most class-conscious workers in order to build a democratic centralist mass revolutionary workers party.

IWG sets itself the task of fighting for revolutionary unity based upon a principled programme. The elements of this programme are the basis for our current work and activity. We will co-operate in a non-sectarian fashion with all who agree with us in whole or in part. We seek fusion with all those with whom we have fundamental programmatic agreement. Principled debate and discussion will be the first major step towards the creation of a collective Marxist leadership alone capable of providing the resources adequate to serious programme-development and party-building.